

Ambassador Zaheer Pervaiz Khan  
Embassy of Pakistan to Norway  
Postboks 4051, AMB  
0244 Oslo

Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my concern about the imprisonment of Mr Asif Pervaiz who was arrested in 2013 accused of committing blasphemy and thereby violating Pakistan Penal Code 295A, 295B and 295C. Mr Pervaiz had an argument with some colleagues because they pressured him to convert to Islam. Shortly after, his phone was stolen in his workplace, and he was arrested by the police who told him that blasphemous texts had been sent from his cell phone. Even five years later, Mr Pervaiz has not received a verdict. Proceedings are still going on in the Sessions Court Lahore where the Court is examining evidence and questioning witnesses.

Your Excellency, I am concerned that Mr Pervaiz has been set up as revenge for refusing to convert, and that he is innocent of the blasphemy charges. If this is true, Mr Pervaiz has done nothing wrong, and is instead targeted because of his faith.

Since 2011, around 100 blasphemy cases have been registered in Pakistan, with nearly as many (currently) serving prison sentences for blasphemy charges. Others have been killed by mobs provoked by blasphemy accusations, regardless of the accusations' validity. In several cases, false allegations of blasphemy are made against religious minorities who are involved in personal or legal conflicts with neighbours or colleagues.

May I respectfully remind you of your government's obligations to uphold the right to freedom of religion or belief for all Pakistanis, as guaranteed by the Constitution of Pakistan and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Pakistan is a party. Accordingly, the nation of Pakistan is obligated to ensure that everyone under its jurisdiction can practise their religion, thought and conscience publicly or privately, alone or with others.

I humbly petition your intervention to ensure that:

- the basic human rights of Mr Asif Pervaiz are respected;
- his case is solved speedily in hearings that adhere to international human rights standards,
- if his case is unfounded, he shall be acquitted and released immediately;
- efforts are made to ensure that believers of all religions are protected against false accusations of blasphemy in Pakistan.

I thank you in advance for using your influence as ambassador and conveying this message to the relevant authorities in your home country.

Yours sincerely,