

Absender:

His Excellency **Mr. Arif Alvi**
President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
via **Botschaft Pakistan**
Schaperstr. 29
10719 Berlin

Date: _____

Your Excellency,

Please forgive me for taking the liberty of bringing the fate of the 58-year-old Christian Protestant pastor, the Rev. Zafar Bhatti, to your attention. On the 3rd of January 2022, he was sentenced to death by the Lahore High Court Bench in Rawalpindi, and he is now being held in the Rawalpindi Adiala Jail. Zafar Bhatti has been in prison since July 2012, which is about ten years. The “Blasphemy Law” has apparently been abused on an innocent man. There is no evidence whatsoever to support the allegation that he used his mobile phone to send offensive text messages to Muslims.

The SIM card number used to send the blasphemous messages was not registered in his name but in the name of Ms Ghazala Khan. In April of 2013, she was sentenced for this offense, but subsequently released on bail. Khan died in November of 2016. Finally, in May of 2017, Zafar Bhatti was sentenced to life imprisonment for allegedly insulting the Prophet Mohammed and his mother. Since then, hearings that had already been scheduled were adjourned, and judges referred the case with suspicious frequency to other benches. There is much to suggest that the respective courts were under pressure to issue certain sentences. Retaliatory justice can however not be tolerated.

In a resolution of April 29, 2021, the European Parliament also pointed out that the “Blasphemy Law” is frequently used to blame an opponent with false, personally motivated allegations. Therefore, the European Parliament called for the repeal of this law and for the general abolition of the death penalty in Pakistan.

Due to the prison conditions and the dramatic course of his trial, Bhatti's health is poor, he is diabetic, almost blind and also suffered a heart attack on September 3rd, 2020. After many previous attempts, his defense has therefore submitted another application on December 2nd, 2021 for his release on bail.

For these reasons, dear Mr. President, I humbly beseech you to advocate the immediate release of Pastor Zafar Bhatti.

Most respectfully,