

The Rt. Hon. Azam Nazeer Tarar
Federal Minister of Law and Justice
Ministry of Law and Justice
Location Blocks S & R Pakistan Secretariat
Islamabad
Pakistan



July 4, 2022

Dear Mr. Tarar,

I write to ask you to drop charges of blasphemy - a capital offense under Article 295 C of Pakistan's Penal Code - leveled by police officers against two teenage Christian cousins, Sunny Waqas on June 30, 2019, and Noman Masih on July 1, 2019. These two young men have been languishing on death row in Bahawalpur Jail for over three years.

According to the UN Human Rights Committee, "Prohibitions of displays of lack of respect for a religion or other belief system, including blasphemy laws, are incompatible with the covenant [i.e., The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights]." Pakistan has ratified this legally binding International Covenant.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Mr. Ahmed Shaheed, has called for the repeal of such laws, noting that they often serve as platforms for enabling religious intolerance against vulnerable religious minorities.

As a Board Member of the Justice Pakistan Project (JPP) you will be aware of its 2015 report *A "Most Serious Crime": Pakistan's Unlawful Use of the Death Penalty*. As the title of the JPP report suggests, it strongly condemns an entrenched pattern of injustice in Pakistan's legal system regarding blasphemy and other capital punishment cases.

Trusting that you will act in the interest of justice and religious tolerance for Sunny Waqas and Noman Masih, I furthermore ask you to provide guarantees for the safety of these two young Pakistani citizens upon their release from prison. There is the strong possibility of religious extremists committing acts of violence against them because of the blasphemy allegation.

Most Respectfully,

John Eibner, Ph.D (London)
International President