



## CATHOLIC WOMAN IN PAKISTAN SENTENCED TO DEATH BY STONING

**Ashiq Maseeh, husband of Aasia Bibi, talks with Minister of Minority Affairs Shahbaz Bhatti in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. PHOTO: AFP**

**ISLAMABAD, November 24, 2011: The family of Aasia Bibi, who has been sentenced to death for blasphemy, has gone into hiding because of death threats, they said, Wednesday.**

Politicians and clerics are [at loggerheads](#) on whether [President Asif Ali Zardari](#) should pardon Aasia Bibi, a mother of five sentenced to hang for defaming the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) under the blasphemy laws.

Minister for minority affairs, [Shahbaz Bhatti](#), who is himself a Christian, told reporters that Aasia's family had been forced to flee their home but declined to say where they were staying because of security fears.

Aasia's husband, Ashiq Masih, who works in a brick factory in the Shekhupura district near Lahore, said he and his children aged nine to 20 had left home because of death threats, but declined to say where they were now living.

**"We are frightened. We are receiving threats, especially from clerics. They started demonstrations in the area," he told reporters in Bhatti's Islamabad office, accompanied by daughters Eesham, nine, and Sidra, 18.**



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Regards,  
Sultan Shahin,  
Editor and Publisher, NewAgeIslam.com

## **IS BLASPHEMY A CAPITAL CRIME IN ISLAM?**

When the Prophet (PBUH) could forgive a person of unquestionable antagonism towards Islam, why can the ulema (clergy) of Pakistan not let off a poor village woman who is not a known enemy of our religion and whose guilt has not been established beyond doubt?

The brutal assassination of Salmaan Taseer, the outspoken governor of Punjab, is an ominous indication that Pakistan is plunging headlong into a state of ataxia. And one wonders if it will ever come out of it. Salmaan was killed, as confessed by his murderous bodyguard, for being a staunch opponent of the blasphemy laws in Pakistan and seeking presidential pardon for Aasia Bibi, the Christian woman who was recently awarded the death penalty under section 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) for allegedly abusing Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

It is a fact that the use of derogatory language against Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), or for that matter any prophet, is considered a great sin in Islam. But it is also no ordinary crime to sentence somebody to death without evidence. So far, the charges against Aasia Bibi have not been incontrovertibly proved. Pakistan's Federal Minister for Minorities, Shahbaz Bhatti, is on record as saying that the case against her is concocted as the complainant and major witnesses were not present at the site of the incident. But, then, the courts in Pakistan work under tremendous right-wing pressure. It may be recalled that in 1997, the Lahore High Court Judge Arif Iqbal Bhatti, who had acquitted two Christians accused of blasphemy in 1995, was shot dead-- **A Faizur Rahman**

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