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PAKISTAN: Christian group demands release of jailed Pakistani Hindu

Christian group demands release of jailed Pakistani Hindu

Notan Lal, who ran a school in Sindh province, was charged with blasphemy and given 25 years jail term

By Kamran Chaudhry

UCA News (11.02.2022) – <https://bit.ly/3Bnqhj5> – An international rights organization focused on religious freedom has demanded the immediate release of a Hindu school principal in Pakistan after he was sentenced to 25 years in prison on

blasphemy charges.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) joined Hindu groups to seek justice for Notan Lal after a court in court in Sukkur, Sindh province found him guilty of blasphemy on Feb. 7.

"CSW is deeply concerned by the heavy sentence handed down to Notan Lal," said CSW's Founder President Mervyn Thomas in a Feb. 10 press release.

Lal was accused of blasphemy by an 11-grade student of his school in 2019. He was accused of making "derogatory remarks" against the Prophet.

Thomas said Lal was "the latest victim of Pakistan's unjust blasphemy laws, which are wholly incompatible with the fundamental right to freedom of religion or belief, and which must be reviewed urgently, with a view to their full repeal in the future."

"We call for Mr. Lal's immediate and unconditional release, and for that of all those imprisoned or detained on similar charges," Thomas added.

In a Facebook post, the All Pakistan Hindu Panchayat requested higher authorities and the chief justice of Pakistan to re-investigate the case.

"Very sad, lots of innocent people are being punished for a crime they didn't commit. Everybody knows who got him framed on false charges," it stated.

Lal owned and ran the private school in Ghotki in Sindh province. He was detained on Sept 15, 2019, soon after a student accused him of insulting the Prophet Muhammad.

The controversial accusations against him prompted protests and riots in Ghotki with unruly mobs ransacking the school, vandalizing a Hindu temple and looting shops.

Most Hindus in Pakistan live in the southern Sindh province and are often the target of extremist groups.

According to the Centre for Social Justice, at least 1,890 persons have been accused of committing blasphemy from 1987 to 2021.

There have been 81 extrajudicial killings on suspicion of blasphemy and apostasy from 1992 until 2021. Among the victims, 45 were Muslims, 23 Christians, nine Ahmadis, two Hindus, and two persons whose religious identity could not be ascertained.

Last month, a 50-year-old Hindu trader Sutan Lal Dewan was shot dead by armed men when he was returning home from an inauguration ceremony at a cotton factory in Daharki town in Ghotki district, Sindh province.

Photo : Notan Lal at his school in Ghotki town, Sindh province of Pakistan. (Photo supplied)

[Further reading about FORB in Pakistan on HRWF website](#)

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