

# PAKISTAN: Mentally disabled Christian accused of blasphemy in Pakistan

*Islamic cleric leads mob to attack mentally disabled believer and family*

International Christian Concern (13.03.2019) – <https://bit.ly/2Hy8Sd0> – International Christian Concern (ICC) has learned that Stephen Masih, a 42-year-old mentally disabled Christian, was accused of committing blasphemy against the prophet of Islam. He was accused on March 11, 2019, in Badiana, a neighborhood in the district of Sialkot in Pakistan's Punjab province. Faraz Masih, the victim's nephew and an eyewitness, informed ICC that Masih has been mentally disabled since birth. According to Faraz, the entire neighborhood knows Stephen's mental status and local children often tease and beat him.

Stephen Masih was accused of derogatory remarks against the prophet Muhammad by Hafiz Muhammad Mudasir, a local Muslim. During the incident in question, Stephen was debating with his brother-in-law over fasting and praying during Lent. However, because of his mental state, he became exacerbated and began shouting loudly, attracting attention from the neighbors.

When Mudasir reached Stephen's house, he began beating Stephen, unprovoked. The family members protested against Mudasir's illogical interference into the family's matter. Mudasir, who identifies as a cleric, left Stephen's house in

anger, warning that he would teach Stephen a lesson for insulting him. Shortly after, Mudasir returned, leading a mob of angry Muslims.

With direction from Mudasir, the mob began beating Stephen and other family members for the alleged crime of blasphemy. Police have registered a First Information Report (FIR) against Stephen under the country's blasphemy laws, section 295 C of the Pakistan Penal Code. Stephen is currently in police custody.

While speaking with ICC, Ayub Qaiser, Director of FGA Pakistan, said, "It is sad and shocking that blasphemy laws are being misused, even against special persons. The authorities must look into the situation and introduce amendments and special care of the mentally immature people." Qaiser urged for protection for Stephen's family members and a fair trial of the case.

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