

His Excellency
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Your Excellency;

Please permit me, dear Mr. President, to take the liberty of bringing the fate of the 16-year old Pakistani Christian, Asif Stephen, to your attention. This mentally handicapped teenager was accused of blasphemy and arrested on August 12th, 2017 in the village of Jhamkay (District of Gujranwala in the Punjab.) A gentleman by the name of Muhammed Nawaz accused him of theft in the local bazar and then claimed that he had burned a copy of the Holy Qur'an.

Following that incident, a furious crowd began to beat up the youngster. Sent for police took him into custody in the local police station, where a mob of about 300 people, led by a local politician, attempted to lynch the Christian teenager. Massive police intervention prevented this from happening.

Asif's parents categorically deny that their son has set a copy of the Holy Qur'an alight and that he has committed a theft. Asif contributes to the family's income by collecting discarded bottles at a cemetery near the family home. However, Mr. Muhammed Nawaz claims that these bottles belong to him, which has caused repeated disputes between him and Asif. Following his arrest, Asif's family had to go into hiding, fearing for their safety.

For many years now, the „International Society for Human Rights“ (ISHR) has drawn attention to the legal circumstances, which put Christians and other religious minorities in Pakistan into jeopardy. Pakistani human rights activists deplore the fact that the blasphemy law has become a medium of revenge and for settling personal disputes.

Therefore, dear Mr. President, I humbly beseech you to advocate the immediate release of Mr. Asif Stephen and to also guarantee the safety his family.

Most respectfully,