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# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 40/95

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - PAKISTAN

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Iraqi Kurdistan (Northern Iraq) - 28 February - SEE NEWS SERVICE 266 & 35/95  
Campaign on Women - 7 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 12/95, 34/95 & 37/95

Brazil - 27 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 29/95

RWANDA - 6 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

SYRIA - 11 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 32/95

## TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

CAMBODIA - 14 MARCH - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

## EVENTS AND MISSIONS

NB: The details below are for your information only, and there may or may not be media work involved. Can you please not publicize anything until further notice from the IS.

MISSION TO KENYA 16 March - 2 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

MISSION TO BURUNDI 27 February - 14 March- SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - 24 JANUARY 1995  
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PAKISTAN: ACQUITTAL OF SALAMAT MASIH AND REHMAT MASIH

Amnesty International welcomes yesterday's acquittal of Salamat Masih and Rehmat Masih of blasphemy charges but is now worried that their lives may be in danger outside the courtroom.

Both men have received death threats during the weeks of the appeal and the human rights organization is calling on the government to provide protection for them upon their release from Kot Lakhpat jail in Lahore.

Others involved in the case, including family members, lawyers, judges and human rights activists, have also received death threats and Amnesty International urges the government to take effective measures to protect them as well.

The acquittal of Salamat Masih and Rehmat Masih overturns a death sentence imposed on them on 9 February. One of the defence lawyers Hina Jilani told Amnesty International "Justice has finally been done: it's been long overdue!"

The appeal against conviction was heard by a two-judge bench of the Lahore High Court; rejecting the prosecution evidence, Judge Arif Iqbal Bhatti said that it seemed "some elements were trying to create provocation and mischief".

He stated: "This is a landmark judgement...the decision is based on law, our conscience and keeping in view the fact that we are answerable to God and his last Prophet (Mohammad)".

Asma Jehangir, another member of the team of defence lawyers involved in the case, stated "I expected this decision - but this is not a time for celebration. The case is not the issue. The real issue is the need to change the blasphemy laws, which have been hi-jacked by alleged 'orthodox' believers who are in fact terrorists".

Amnesty International continues to urge the government of Benazir Bhutto to introduce legislation which would prevent further abuse of the blasphemy law and similar miscarriages of justice; the government had, in early 1994, announced such changes but failed to pursue them when Islamists protested.

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