

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: ASA 33/06/95

Distr: SC/CO

**Amnesty International
International Secretariat
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 8DJ
United Kingdom**

Date: 6 February 2015

£Pakistan: @Salamat Masih and Rehmat Masih are acquitted

On 23 February Salamat Masih and Rehmat Masih were acquitted of the charge of blasphemy, overturning a death sentence that was imposed on them on 9 February. 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 consciences and keeping in view the fact that we are answerable to God and his last Prophet (Mohammad)". Welcoming the news, defence lawyer Hina Jilani told Amnesty International "justice has been done; it is long overdue!".

The two former prisoners of conscience have, according to reports, left Pakistan to avoid the risk of being attacked by armed Islamist groups. They had received death threats and been the targets of such attacks before. (Please see UA 137/94 AI Index ASA 33/02/94 and Further information ASA 33/06/94)

Amnesty International welcomes the acquittal of Salamat Masih and Rehmat Masih. However, the organization continues to be concerned about the safety of others involved in the case including family members, lawyers, judges and human rights activists who according to Amnesty International's information have received death threats. Amnesty International urges the government to take effective measures to protect anyone at risk of being attacked because of family connections or involvement in bringing about the acquittal of Salamat Masih and Rehmat Masih.

Asma Jahangir, 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 the 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.

POINTS TO RAISE IN LETTERS TO GOVERNMENT

- ◆ Welcome the news that Salamat Masih and Rehmat Masih have been acquitted of the charge of blasphemy, overturning the death sentences imposed on them both;
- ◆ Urge the government to take urgent and effective measures to protect others involved in the case from attacks by Islamists;
- ◆ Call for the amendment, and at the very least, the introduction of procedural changes in the blasphemy law to prevent innocent people from being charged under this law and further such miscarriages of justice.

SELECTED ADDRESSES OF GOVERNMENT**Appendix 1**

1. President Farooq Leghari
Office of the President
Islamabad
Pakistan

2. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto
Office of the Prime Minister
Islamabad
Pakistan

[Salutation: Dear President]

[Salutation: Dear Prime Minister]

3. Mr Nabi Dad Khan
Minister of Law
Ministry of Law, Justice and
Parliamentary Affairs
Pakistan Secretariat
Islamabad
Pakistan

4. Maj. Gen. (Retd.) Nasirullah Khan
Babar
Minister of the Interior
Pakistan Secretariat
Islamabad
Pakistan

[Salutation: Dear Minister]

[Salutation: Dear Minister]

LIST OF PRESS IN PAKISTAN**Appendix 2**

Amn
Akhbar Manzil
Off I.I. Chundrigar Road
Karachi
Pakistan

Daily Jang
HQ Printing House
I.I. Chundrigar Road
POB 52
Karachi
Pakistan

Daily News
Printing House
I.I. Chundrigar Road
Karachi
Pakistan
The Nation
Nipeo House
4 Sharah-e-Fatima Jinnah
POB 1815

Dawn
Haroon House
Dr Ziauddin Ahmed Road
Karachi 4
Pakistan
Frontier Post
32 Stadium Road
Peshawar
Pakistan

**Lahore 54000
Pakistan**

**Pakistan Times
Rattan Chand Road
GPOB 223
Lahore
Pakistan**

**Newsline
3/A Sand Haven
FT 22/3
Frere Town
Karachi
Pakistan**

**The News
Murree Road
Rawalpindi
Pakistan**

**Imroze
Rattan Chand Road
Lahore 54000
Pakistan**

**Nawa-i-Waqt
4 Sharah-e-Fatima Jinnah
Lahore 54000
Pakistan**

**Herald
Haroon House
Dr Ziauddin Ahmed Road
Karachi 4
Pakistan**

News Agencies

**Associated Press of Pakistan (APP)
House 1
St.5, F-6/3,
POB 1258
Islamabad
Pakistan**

**Pakistan Press International (PPI)
Press Centre
Shahrah Kamal Ataturk
POB 541
Karachi
Pakistan**