

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 137/94 Political killing / fear for safety

6 April 1994

PAKISTAN                   Manzoor Masih (aged 35)  
                              Rehmat Masih (aged 37),  
                              Salamat Masih (aged 13),  
                              John Joseph

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On 5 April 1994 in Lahore, Manzoor Masih, a Christian, was shot dead and three other Christians, Rehmat Masih, Salamat Masih and John Joseph were seriously injured. Their attackers were three gunmen who eyewitnesses have named as members of the Islamist party, Sepah-e Sahaba. Amnesty International is gravely concerned by the killing and its fears for the safety of the three survivors are heightened by the apparent lack of police action to protect the Christians or to arrest the perpetrators.

The attack took place near the Lahore High Court (and about 200 metres away from a police station) just after the Christians had left a court hearing. The first three named above (all members of the same family) had been charged with blasphemy by leaders of the Sepah-e Sahaba party. Legal experts maintain that the charges are unsubstantiated and based on a local clergy's personal grievances.

Eyewitnesses identified the gunmen as Imam Bux, Mohammad Akram and Malik Sadiq, all in their mid-twenties, and submitted their names to the police. Two Sepah-e Sahaba leaders, Maulvi Muhammad Fazl-e-Haq and Master Enayat, were also named as having authorized the attack. As of 6 April, none of the accused had been arrested or questioned by the police.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Manzoor Masih, Rehmat Masih and Salamat Masih were arrested in May 1993 in Gujranwala in central Punjab province. They were accused of blasphemy by the local clergy, Maulvi Fazl-e-Haq, who is also a leader of Sepah-e Sahaba party. He accused the 13-year-old boy, Salamat Masih of having written blasphemous slogans on the local mosque. But local people testified that Salamat Masih could not read or write.

The three were charged under section 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code which was modified in mid-1992 to provide for mandatory death for anyone defiling the name of the Prophet Mohammad. Human rights campaigners protested against their continued imprisonment. Their cases were transferred from Gujranwala to Lahore on the grounds that the safety of the prisoners could not be guaranteed: there had been frequent demonstrations in and outside the court room by members of Sepah-e Sahaba in Gujranwala demanding the execution of the accused.

Salamat Masih was released on bail in November 1993 and Manzoor and Rehmat Masih were released on bail in January 1994, although the charges remained against them.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in English or in your own language:**

- urging the authorities to bring to justice without delay those responsible for the extrajudicial killing of Manzoor Masih and the injuries sustained by the other three Christians;
- urging the authorities to take measures to ensure the safety of people accused

of blasphemy in Pakistan including those injured in this incident;  
- calling on the authorities to bring to justice any local police personnel found to have deliberately failed to protect the victims.

**APPEALS TO**

1. President Farooq Ahmad Leghari

Office of the President

Islamabad, Pakistan

**Faxes: +92 51 811390**

**Telegrams: President Leghari, Islamabad, Pakistan**

**Salutation: Dear President**

2. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto

Office of the Prime Minister

Islamabad, Pakistan

**Telexes: 5742**

**Faxes: as for President, but for attention of Prime Minister Bhutto**

**Telegrams: Prime Minister Bhutto, Islamabad, Pakistan**

**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

3. Mr Mian Ahmad Manzoor Wattoo

Punjab Chief Minister

Lahore, Pakistan

**Telegrams: Chief Minister Wattoo, Lahore, Pakistan**

**Salutation: Dear Chief Minister**

4. Iqbal Haider

Minister of Law

Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs

Pak Secretariat, Blocks R & S

Islamabad

Pakistan

**Telegrams: Minister of Law, Islamabad, Pakistan**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

diplomatic representatives of Pakistan accredited to your country

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 18 May 1994.