

Week 2: Pray for Asia Bibi (Pakistan)

Arrest and Sentence Asia Bibi (49) is a Christian farm labourer from the Punjab village of Ittanwali in northeast Pakistan, 75km from Lahore. In June 2009, she was working in the fields with a group of Muslim women and went to fetch water. The other women said it should not be drunk as it had been brought by an "untouchable" and was therefore unclean. After a heated argument, one of the women reported to the local imam that Asia had said: "Jesus Christ died on the cross for me – what did Mohammed ever do for you?" The imam filed a case with the police under Pakistan's blasphemy laws, and publicly denounced Asia. Local men beat her in front of her children and the police took her into custody for protection.



A mob demonstrated outside the court during Asia's hearing in November 2010 and the judge, bowing to extremist pressure, handed down the death sentence. A cleric promised 500,000 rupees (€4370) to anyone who would kill her in jail. Asia is the first Pakistani woman to be sentenced to death under the blasphemy laws. Two politicians who supported her, Punjab Governor Salman Taseer and Minorities Minister Shab haz Bhatti, have been assassinated for expressing their support.



Family Asia is married to Ashiq Masih, with whom she has two daughters, Isha (16) and Isham (15), who has an intellectual disability and walking difficulties. They miss their mother very much. Ashiq also has three children from a previous marriage. The family receives help from Christian groups, including education at a private Christian school. Over the past five years, Ashiq and the girls have had to move five times to avoid attack. They have received death threats and live in constant fear.

Latest news On 16 October 2014, after several postponements, Asia's appeal was heard in Lahore High Court. It was dismissed and the death sentence was upheld. Over twenty mullahs attended the hearing, and afterwards they celebrated and chanted religious slogans. Asia's lawyer said an appeal would be filed with the Supreme Court in Islamabad. In November 2014, Ashiq wrote to President Mamnoon Hussain pleading that he pardon Asia, so that she and the family might move to France, where they have been offered support.

In a recent BBC interview, Isham said "We saw her last December – we asked the warden to open the cell so we can hug her, but he didn't. My mother hugged and kissed us from behind the bars. She cried deep from her heart."

Prayer Points

1. Pray that God will continue to protect Asia in prison and encourage her as she waits for the Supreme Court hearing.
2. Pray for God's protection for Ashiq, Isha and Isham as they live in constant fear.
3. Pray for Asia to be released soon and reunited with her family in a safe place.