

Week 6: Pray for Ashfaq Masih (Pakistan)



Ashfaq Masih (37) is a Pentecostal bike mechanic from Mariam Colony in Lahore's Green Town neighbourhood. He has been in prison since June 2017, when he was accused of blasphemy after a dispute with a Muslim customer over payment for repairing a motorbike. His court hearings were cancelled repeatedly until he was eventually sentenced to death by hanging in July 2022.

On 15 June 2017 Muhammad Irfan got his motorbike mended at Ashfaq's repair shop but when Ashfaq asked for payment he refused to pay the full amount, saying he was a poor sadhu (religious devotee) and that Ashfaq should honour him. Ashfaq replied that he only believed in Jesus Christ and refused to reduce the price, telling the bike owner that he was poor himself and needed the money. An argument developed, a crowd gathered and Ashfaq was accused of blasphemy for reportedly "disrespecting" the Prophet Muhammad by telling Irfan that Christians believe Jesus was the final prophet.

Police were called and they arrested Ashfaq and brought him to Green Town police station, where a blasphemy case was registered. Ashfaq was imprisoned in Lahore's Camp Jail but has since been transferred to Sahiwal Jail, 180 km from Lahore.

Ashfaq testified in court that he was framed on false charges by the landlord of his shop, Muhammad Ashfaq (the complainant in the case) and Muhammad Naveed, who runs a nearby bike repair shop – he said Naveed was jealous of his success and held a grudge. Lawyer Riaz Anjum explained, "Masih believes both Ashfaq and Naveed conspired to implicate him in a blasphemy case by using Irfan."

Ashfaq's family hired former Pakistan Bar Council Vice Chairman Abid Saqi to file an appeal in the Lahore High Court and the Lahore-based NGO Human Friends Organisation said it would bear the legal costs.

Family

Ashfaq and his wife Nabeela have a daughter aged nine. His family fled the neighbourhood when he was accused of blasphemy but has since returned home. Ashfaq's mother Zeenat died in November 2019, leaving his father Yaqoob and his older brother Mehmood; Ashfaq was briefly released to attend her funeral. The family is very poor but is receiving support.

Latest News

Nabeela visited Ashfaq on 19 October 2023 and reported that he was very disturbed because so much time had passed in jail and by the ongoing delays in his case.

Prayer Diary

Sunday	Ask God to comfort and encourage Ashfaq.
Monday	Pray that Ashfaq would soon be acquitted and released.
Tuesday	Ask God to keep Ashfaq safe and well in prison.
Wednesday	Pray for hope and strength for Ashfaq's family.
Thursday	Pray for protection and provision for Nabeela.
Friday	Ask God for courage and protection for lawyers and judges.
Saturday	Pray for reform of Pakistan's blasphemy laws.

