

Week 1: Pray for Zafar Bhatti (Pakistan)



Pastor Zafar Bhatti (62) has been in prison in Rawalpindi since July 2012, when he was accused of sending blasphemous text messages. The mobile phone SIM was not registered to his name and he denied the charge. In May 2017 he was sentenced to life imprisonment and in January 2022 this was increased to the death sentence.

His appeal hearings have been adjourned repeatedly and he has become Pakistan's longest-serving prisoner under the notorious blasphemy laws, which are the source of so much suffering for innocent people.

Before his arrest Zafar sold medicines and provided pastoral care to families he visited, reading the Bible and praying with them. He also founded and led a small NGO called "Jesus World Mission" to assist the poor.

In July 2012 a local Islamic leader filed a complaint with police, saying he had been sent messages from an unknown number insulting the Prophet Mohammed's mother. He threatened that his organisation would take matters into its own hands if police did not open a blasphemy investigation.

A First Incident Report was lodged against an unknown person but police later arrested Zafar, although the SIM was registered to his colleague Ghazala Khan, who was also arrested and charged with blasphemy. She died in 2016. At Zafar's trial in 2017 the judge said he would sentence him to life in prison rather than impose the death penalty because there was no evidence against him.

Zafar has often been attacked in prison by Islamist prisoners and guards so he is kept under high security and is not allowed out of his cell. For security reasons court proceedings have been carried out by the judge in the cell. He suffers from diabetes and severe heart disease and has had three heart attacks. Prison doctors have recommended that he apply again for bail on medical grounds, which was refused in March 2022.

Family

Zafar and his wife Nawab (75) do not have children and Nawab struggles with very poor health. She has high blood pressure, hearing loss and is blind in one eye but her sight has improved following recent cataract surgery.

Latest News

In January 2025 a prison doctor described Zafar's health as "critical" due to diabetes and heart disease. He has gangrene in his right foot and his heart function is only 10%. Two Christian prisoners have been assigned as bodyguards in Zafar's cell as he has been attacked many times.

Prayer Diary

Sunday	Pray for medical treatment and healing for Zafar.
Monday	Pray for hope and encouragement for him and Nawab.
Tuesday	Pray that Zafar would be acquitted and released soon.
Wednesday	Ask God to sustain and provide for Nawab.
Thursday	Pray for better health for Nawab.
Friday	Ask God to protect Zafar from extremist attacks.
Saturday	Pray for reform of Pakistan's blasphemy laws.

