

PRISONER PROFILE

Prisoner Name: **Zafar Bhatti**

Location: **Pakistan**

Arrested: **July 2012**



Arrest and background

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In prison, Zafar has experienced pressure from Muslim prisoners to convert to Islam, and has been beaten several times. In March 2013, someone poisoned his food, which caused bleeding from the nose and mouth and left him in a critical condition for days. On September 25, 2014, mistaken rumours circulated that Zafar had been shot dead in his prison cell. In fact it was not actually him who been attacked, but the prisoner in an adjacent cell, British Muslim Muhammad Asghar (aged 71), who had been sentenced to death for blasphemy. Ashgar, who was arrested in 2010, had a history of mental illness.

Police officer Muhammad Yousaf, who had been deployed to protect Muhammad Asghar, shot him in the chest. The bullet broke two of his ribs and punctured his right lung, but he recovered in hospital. Prison guards arrested Yousaf, who apparently had planned to kill all prison inmates accused of blasphemy.

Following numerous attempts to kill Zafar in prison his family are very concerned for his safety.

When a husband and father is imprisoned it causes significant pressure for the family. Reports indicate that Zafar's wife, Nawab, has struggled to make ends meet since her husband's arrest and was forced to send her younger children to live with their grandparents as she could not afford to keep them. Nawab's older daughters were put in arranged marriages at very young ages for financial reasons.

As with other blasphemy accused in Pakistan, Zafar may remain in prison for a considerable length of time before his case is finally dealt with. The courts are often reluctant to tackle the underlying injustice and abuse of the blasphemy laws for fear of reprisal by Muslims extremists and many times postpone hearings indefinitely, leaving the accused languishing in a prison cell.

This happened again on October 10, 2019 when a High Court ruling on the case was expected. The sitting was adjourned without any decision and no new date was given to hear the appeal.

PRAY:

1. For God's protection for Zafar and that he would experience a deep peace and joy that comes from knowing Jesus as well as the courage and power that comes from the Holy Spirit.
2. That God will touch and change the hearts of Zafar's accusers as well as officials involved in his case.
3. For Pastor Zafar's wife and wider family including his children; pray they will experience God's presence and help during this testing time.

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