

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 26, 2018

Breaking news! – Asia Bibi appeal trial possibly tomorrow, April 27, 2018

Bibi, sentenced to death in Pakistan on blasphemy charges, may be tried on appeal on Friday

PAKISTAN'S CHIEF JUSTICE TO PERSONALLY PRESIDE OVER ASIA BIBI'S BLASPHEMY CASE

Pakistan's chief justice says he will 'soon' decide the fate of Asia Bibi (Aasiya Noreen), a Christian mother-of-five who was sentenced to death for blasphemy in 2010. Unconfirmed reports indicate that the trial may take place as early as tomorrow, April 27, 2018.

Chief Justice Saqib Nisar told Asia's lawyer, Saif ul Malook, that he would hear Asia's appeal. "Be ready, Saif ul Malook. I am going to fix your case soon and I myself will preside over the bench," the Catholic news service UCAN reported Nisar as saying.

Asia herself has learned of the chief justice's intentions, according to the Italian news organisation La Stampa. "She was thrilled and full of hope; she reacted with great faith, giving praise to God," said Joseph Nadeem, a family friend, after a visit to Asia in the Multan women's prison. Nadeem reported Asia to be in good health.

As part of his decision to hear Asia's appeal, Justice Nisar ordered police protection for Malook to be restored. Two prominent Pakistani politicians were assassinated in 2010 after they spoke publicly in Asia's defence.

"Bibi's family and everyone else who understands her ordeal, are ecstatic at the news that her appeal will be heard soon," Malook told UCAN. According to [Pakistan Today](#), the Chief Justice also said that all criminal appeals before the Supreme Court will be decided by July.

ASIA BIBI AND PAKISTAN'S BLASPHEMY LAWS

Asia Bibi's case is one of the most infamous of the many ongoing blasphemy cases in Pakistan; she was the first woman to be sentenced to death for blasphemy in Pakistan.

Asia Bibi was going to the village well to get water in 2009, when some Muslim women tried to chase her away from the well, claiming that she would make the water 'unclean' if she used it. Asia responded by saying that Jesus had rescued her and then asked, "What has your prophet done for you?" For this simple question, she was sentenced to death for blasphemy in 2010, and has been in prison ever since.

The verdict against her was suspended in 2015, and she was scheduled to bring her appeal to Pakistan's Supreme Court at the end of 2016. However, this was postponed.

Asia's case isn't the only one. The most recent available data shows that in 2010, there were 162 Christians imprisoned in Pakistan for blasphemy. Often, those who accuse Christians of blasphemy take the punishment for the 'crime' into their own hands, leading to beatings and killings.

Knowing that they could be accused of blasphemy at any time causes great fear among Christians in Pakistan.

Gary Stagg, executive director of Open Doors Canada says, "Pakistan's widely condemned 'Blasphemy' laws are very often used to settle personal scores. Christians and other minorities feel intimidated and repressed all too often for fear of being condemned. Our prayers go out for the upcoming hearing of Asia's case by Chief Justice Saqib Nisar. Let us continue to pray for her swift release."

WE ASK CHRISTIANS TO STAND WITH THEIR CHURCH FAMILY IN PAKISTAN

[Pakistan is number five on the 2018 World Watch List](#), Open Doors' ranking of the 50 countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution. In many ways, Pakistan can seem like a land of great darkness. Christians are a tiny minority: the official figure is just 3.9 million in a country of 197 million, and they face daily discrimination and frequent violent attacks.

There are three ways to support persecuted Christians in Pakistan today:

- **[GIVE A GIFT:](#)** Every \$98 could [provide vital urgent assistance](#). Open Doors is supporting persecuted Christians in Pakistan in cooperation with local churches and other partnering ministries.
- **[TELL YOUR CHURCH:](#)** Many Christians in Canada have no idea about the level of persecution facing our church family around the world. You can get the word out and introduce your church to their persecuted church family using our [free Church Resources](#).
- **[PRAY:](#)** Use the prayer points below. For regular prayer updates, visit our [online prayer page](#) to help you to pray throughout the year. Pray for the 50 countries on the [World Watch List](#).

WE ASK FOR PRAYER:

- For freedom for Asia Bibi and others who are imprisoned for blasphemy
- For comfort for Asia and her family
- For protection for Asia, her family, her legal team, and those involved with her case - two prominent Pakistani politicians were assassinated in 2010 after they spoke publicly in Asia's defence
- For wisdom and courage for Pakistan's leaders to reform the blasphemy laws.

FOR INTERVIEWS AND MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

Monica Ratra (905) 636-0944 or email media@odcan.org