

URGENT ACTION

ASIA BIBI LEAVES PAKISTAN FOR CANADA A FREE WOMAN

Asia Bibi is a Christian farm worker, who was sentenced to death for blasphemy in 2010. After an eight-year ordeal, Pakistan's Supreme Court acquitted her of all charges and released her in October 2018. Following the decision by the Supreme Court to uphold her acquittal on 29 January 2019, it was confirmed by the Pakistani Foreign Office on 9 May that she had left Pakistan and safely arrived in Canada to be reunited with her family.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

Asia Bibi, a 54-year-old, who has a family of five children, was sentenced to death for blasphemy in November 2010, Asia Bibi was accused of insulting the Prophet Muhammad after offering her fellow farmworker a glass of water who responded by saying that it was "unclean" because Asia Bibi was a Christian.

Three years after accepting Asia Bibi's appeal for consideration, the Supreme Court acquitted her of all charges on 31 October 2018, citing insufficient evidence. After the ruling was announced, violent protests erupted in major cities in Pakistan. As a result, it was agreed that Asia Bibi's name would be added to the Exit Control List and that the Supreme Court would hear a "review petition" that sought overturning her acquittal.

On 29 January 2019, the review petition was dismissed. Reports emerged that Asia Bibi was in protective custody, and still unable to leave Pakistan. However, on 8 May 2019, her lawyer announced that she had safely arrived in Canada to be reunited with her family. This was confirmed a day later by the Foreign Office of Pakistan.

We are extremely grateful to supporters who wrote appeals to not only acquit Asia Bibi but to also ensure her safe passage out of Pakistan. Her wrongful death sentence has also helped bring more nuance into the discourse around the blasphemy laws and their rampant misuse. Offered asylum in Canada, Asia Bibi can begin to live her life as a free woman.

"We thank you, for standing with Asia Bibi during her ordeal. It's a great relief that Asia Bibi and her family are safe. She should never have been imprisoned in the first place, let alone faced the death penalty," said Omar Waraich, Deputy South Asia Director at Amnesty International.

Pakistan's blasphemy laws are notoriously vague and carry heavy penalties. On the basis of little or no evidence, the accused can face a death sentence. Amnesty International continues to call for the blasphemy laws to be repealed and for any new legislation to fully comply with international law and standards.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Asia Noreen (aka Asia Bibi) (she/her)

THIS IS THE FIRST AND FINAL UPDATE FOR UA 192/18

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa33/9373/2018/en/>

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