

Testimony of

Rev. Thomas J. Reese, S.J.

Chair

U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom

Before the

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

On

Blasphemy Laws and Censorship by States and Non-State Actors:

Examining Global Threats to Freedom of Expression

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I want to thank Representatives Joseph Pitts and James McGovern, Co-Chairs of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, and members of the Commission for holding this hearing on “Blasphemy Laws and Censorship by States and Non-State Actors: Examining Global Threats to Freedom of Expression” and inviting me to testify today. I am Rev. Thomas J. Reese, S.J., Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission created by the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). The Commission uses international standards to monitor the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad and makes policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress.

Today’s hearing could not be timelier. Blasphemy laws lie at the intersection of two crucially important freedoms – the freedoms of religion and expression, both of which are being challenged today. In addition, blasphemy laws often lead to instability and violence in countries around the world, with negative consequences for individuals, communities, and nations.

Instead of promoting blasphemy laws or remaining silent in the face of vigilante violence, governments should support more speech, protect freedom of conscience for all, and promote tolerance and interfaith understanding. Such efforts include creating the space for believers to speak out against those who treat their religion with contempt and join others who condemn contemptuous and hateful speech directed at any religious or non-religious group.

I have been asked to focus my testimony on blasphemy laws and will highlight: the problems with these laws; their global reach and consequences; initial findings from a report on blasphemy that USCIRF will be issuing in the coming months; and recommendations for U.S. government actions.

What’s wrong with blasphemy laws?

Many countries today have blasphemy laws. Blasphemy is defined as “the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God.” These laws, which punish expression or acts deemed blasphemous, defamatory of religions, or contemptuous of religion or religious symbols, figures or, feelings, have punishments ranging from public censure and fines to imprisonment and death, often at the hands of vigilante groups who met out their own justice, often with state impunity. According to their proponents, blasphemy laws promote religious harmony and public order. Unfortunately, they do the opposite and are deeply problematic for the following reasons:

- Blasphemy laws violate international human rights standards: These standards include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Article 18 and 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The UDHR asserts a universal right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including the right to change one’s religion or belief and “freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest this religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

Article 18 of the ICCPR protects the individual right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including the right to manifest this belief through various acts, such as worship,

observance, practice, and teaching. Limitations are permitted only to protect “public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.” Article 19 of the ICCPR protects the individual right to freedom of expression, which may be limited only to protect the rights or reputations of others, national security, public order, or public health or morals. Speech never can justify individuals being jailed.

- Blasphemy laws are inconsistent with the approach agreed to in UN Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18: This consensus resolution, adopted in 2011 and repeated annually since then, replaced flawed UN resolutions on the defamation of religions that sought to internationalize blasphemy laws and protect religions from criticism. Resolution 16/18 offered another approach: protecting individuals from discrimination or violence. By “combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief, Resolution 16/18 seeks to protect the adherents of all religions or beliefs, instead of focusing on one religion. Rather than calling for legal restrictions of peaceful expression, it calls for positive measures, such as education and awareness building, to address intolerance, discrimination, and violence based on religion or belief.
- Blasphemy laws inappropriately make governments the arbitrators of ultimate truths or religious doctrines: These laws turn officials into enforcers of religious orthodoxy and arbiters of truth or religious rightness, empowering the enforcement of particular views against individuals, minorities, and dissenters. In countries where an authoritarian government supports an established religious creed, blasphemy accusations often are used to silence critics or democratic rivals under the guise of enforcing piety.
- Blasphemy laws are used disproportionately against religious minorities or dissenting members of the majority community and are ripe for abuse: Minorities often are victims of blasphemy allegations and arrests in far higher number than their percentage of the population. Members of a majority group often bring charges based on false accusations with no proof required. Authoritarian governments also often use blasphemy laws to quash dissent. Even if not enforced, blasphemy laws chill the exercise of protected rights.
- Blasphemy laws often carry draconian penalties: Individuals accused of blasphemy can face life in prison or even death for “crimes” that are based on mere speech.
- Blasphemy laws embolden religious extremists to commit acts of violence: Instead of promoting religious harmony, blasphemy laws encourage extremists to impose their notions of truth on others, thereby exacerbating intolerance, discrimination and violence. Mere accusations of blasphemy have sparked vigilante violence and targeted killings in several countries. And when governments fail to hold perpetrators accountable, the resulting atmosphere of impunity can further destabilize communities and make them even more vulnerable to extremists. The dangerous idea that blasphemy justifies violence was behind the January 2015 terrorist attacks on the Charlie Hebdo magazine in Paris.

Blasphemy Laws are a Global Concern

Given longstanding concerns about blasphemy laws, USCIRF commissioned and soon will release a major study measuring blasphemy laws' adherence to human rights principles. Prepared by human rights law expert Joelle Fiss and the Cardozo Law School Human Rights and Atrocity Prevention Clinic, the study's goal is to develop targeted advocacy for the reform of blasphemy laws to potentially lower the risk of abuse. The researchers conducted extensive comparative legal research, assembling a compendium of blasphemy laws – which they found in 71 countries globally as of July 2015. This is the largest collection of laws prohibiting blasphemy to date.

The study also analyzed relevant international law principles to develop a set of eight compliance indicators, with associated questions, and then coded each law's content to measure the level of adherence of each law to these indicators. For the coding, the laws were numbered in random order and de-identified so that any information that reasonably could be used to identify a country was removed and replaced with a generic term.

The study looked only at the letter of these laws, and not the political or judicial contexts of their implementation and enforcement. These contexts are important, and future research on these aspects will be important to include in future studies.

While the report will be released in the coming months, I want to provide some initial findings:

- Blasphemy laws exist all over the world, with the greatest number in the Middle East region, followed by, in this order, Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. That blasphemy laws still remain on the books in regions where they are rarely enforced, like Europe and the Americas, suggests potential for reform or even repeal.
- An overwhelming majority of the laws were found in penal codes, with many containing moderately to grossly disproportionate criminal punishments. The most common punishment among blasphemy laws is imprisonment, with 86% of all states with these laws imposing a prison penalty. A few laws impose lashings, forced labor, and the death penalty.
- Blasphemy laws are vaguely worded, and few specify or limit the forum in which blasphemy can occur for purposes of punishment. Moreover, only one-third (34%) specify intent as an element of the crime.
- All of the laws analyzed were found to deviate from international free speech standards; have vague formulations that are difficult to interpret narrowly; and have limitations that are rarely narrowly defined.
- The indicator scores on the protection of a state religion and discrimination against religious groups were particularly significant. In the countries with the lowest scores – meaning that they adhere more closely to international law principles, blasphemy laws do not discriminate among different belief groups, nor do they protect the state religion through punitive measures. Conversely, laws that protect a state religion and discriminate among different belief groups

have the highest scores, meaning they are most human rights non-compliant and indicate a higher risk for abuse.

- The five worst-scoring countries were Iran, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Qatar. The five “best”-scoring countries – although as previously mentioned, *all* the blasphemy laws were found to be problematic from a human rights perspective – were Ireland, Spain, the Philippines, Guyana, St. Lucia, and Grenada.

Based on USCIRF’s ongoing monitoring and reporting, the countries that vigorously enforce blasphemy laws include:

Egypt: Article 98(f) of the Egyptian Penal Code prohibits citizens from “ridiculing or insulting heavenly religions or inciting sectarian strife.” Authorities use this “contempt-of-religion,” or blasphemy, law to detain, prosecute, and imprison members of religious groups whose practices deviate from mainstream Islamic beliefs or whose activities are alleged to jeopardize “communal harmony” or insult Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. In January 2015, President al-Sisi issued a decree that permits the government to ban any foreign publications it deems offensive to religion. Blasphemy cases have increased since 2011.

While the majority of charges have been levied against Sunni Muslims, most of those a court has sentenced to prison terms for blasphemy have been Christians, Shi’a Muslims, and atheists, largely based on flawed trials. According to Egyptian human rights groups, there were at least 21 new blasphemy cases between the beginning of 2015 and early 2016, a sharp increase when compared to the previous year.

Egyptian atheists have experienced an increase in blasphemy charges in recent years, as well as growing societal harassment, and various Egyptian government-sponsored initiatives were launched to counter atheism. In December 2014, Dar al-Ifta published a survey claiming that Egypt was home to 866 atheists, supposedly the “highest number” of any country in the Middle East. Two officials from the office of the Grand Mufti publicly called this finding a “dangerous development.” Over the past two years, the Ministries of Religious Endowments and Sports and Youth co-sponsored a national campaign to combat the spread of atheism among Egyptian youth.

Those who have been convicted of blasphemy charges include:

- **Atheists:** In February 2016, online activist **Mustafa Abdel-Nabi** was convicted in absentia to three years in prison for blasphemy for postings about atheism on his Facebook page. In February 2015, a blogger from Ismailia, **Sherif Gaber**, was sentenced to one year in prison for discussing his atheist views on Facebook: he has gone into hiding. In January 2015, atheist student **Karim Al-Banna** was given a three-year prison term for blasphemy because a court found his Facebook posts to “belittle the divine.” His sentence was upheld by an appeals court.
- **Members of the Coptic Community:** In April 2015, four Coptic Christian teenagers and their teacher were arrested and charged with blasphemy for making a short, private video mocking ISIL. In February 2016, three of the four teens were sentenced to five years in prison and the fourth was ordered to be placed in a juvenile facility. In December 2015, the teacher

was sentenced to three years in prison in a separate trial and was expelled from his village. Appeals for both cases are ongoing. They reportedly have fled the country.

- **Other Prisoners:**

In January 2016, Egyptian writer and poet **Fatma Naoot** was sentenced to three years in prison for “defaming Islam” for a Facebook post criticizing the ritual slaughtering of animals during a Muslim holiday. She remains out of prison pending her appeal.

In May 2015, a well-known television show host, **Islam El-Beheiry**, was convicted of “defaming religious symbols” and sentenced to five years in prison for comments he made about Islam on his program. In December, his sentence was reduced on appeal to one year in prison.

Pakistan: Pakistan’s religious freedom environment long has been marred by religiously-discriminatory constitutional provisions and laws, including its blasphemy laws. Sections 295 and 298 of Pakistan’s Penal Code criminalize acts and speech that insult a religion or religious beliefs or defile the Qur’an, the Prophet Muhammad, a place of worship, or religious symbols. Accusers are not required to present any evidence that blasphemy occurred, which leads to abuse, including false accusations. There are no penalties for false allegations. Moreover, the law sets severe punishments, including death or life in prison, which have been levied against religious minorities including Christians, Hindus, and Ahmadiyya and Shi’a Muslims, as well as Sunni Muslims. USCIRF is aware of nearly 40 individuals currently sentenced to death or serving life sentences for blasphemy in Pakistan. The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, a Pakistan-based NG, compiled and sent to USCIRF the list of blasphemy prisoners included in the Appendix.

An estimated two-thirds of all blasphemy cases in Pakistan occur in Punjab province, where the majority of Pakistan’s religious minorities reside. While Muslims represent the greatest number of individuals charged or sentenced, religious minority communities disproportionately are the victims of blasphemy allegations and arrests. The non-governmental National Commission for Justice and Peace has reported that in 2014, 105 people were charged with blasphemy: 11 Ahmadis, seven Christians, five Hindus, and 82 Muslims. In February 2015, the Punjab Prosecution Department and provincial judiciary announced that they had reviewed 262 blasphemy cases awaiting trial and recommended that 50 be reviewed for dismissal because the accused had been victimized by complainants. No religious minorities were included in the review. Prisoners of conscience include:

- **Aasia Bibi** is a Catholic mother of five and was a farmhand from the village of Ittan Wali in Sheikhpura District of Punjab province. In June 2009, an argument arose with her fellow labors over whether the water she brought was “unclean” because she is Christian and they are Muslim. Later coworkers complained to a cleric that Bibi made derogatory comments about the Prophet Muhammad. Police investigated her remarks, which resulted in her arrest and prosecution for blasphemy under Section 295 C of the Pakistan Penal Code. She spent more than a year in jail. On November 8, 2010, a district court in Nankana Sahib, Punjab, sentenced her to death for blasphemy, the first such sentence for blasphemy handed down against a woman. On October 16, 2014, the Lahore High Court dismissed her appeal and upheld her

death sentence. She appealed, and in July 2015, Pakistan's Supreme Court suspended her death sentence until her appeal could be heard. She remains imprisoned and in October 2015 was put into isolation due to concerns for her safety.

On February 29, 2016, Mumtaz Qadri was executed by hanging for the murder of Punjab governor Salman Taseer, who had spoken out in support of Mrs. Bibi. In the last year, there has been no progress in prosecuting individuals for the 2011 assassination of Minister of Minority Affairs Shahbaz Bhatti, a Christian who had called for blasphemy law reform.

- **Abdul Shakoor** was sentenced on January 2, 2016 to five years in prison on blasphemy charges and three years on terrorism charges for propagating the Ahmadiyya Muslim faith, which is banned in Pakistan, by selling copies of the Qur'an and Ahmadiyya publications. His Shi'a Muslim store manager, Mazhar Sipra, was sentenced to 5 years on terrorism charges. Ahmadis in Pakistan are subject to severe legal restrictions, both in the constitution and criminal code, and suffer from officially-sanctioned discrimination. Ahmadis also continue to be murdered in religiously-motivated attacks that take place with impunity. Pakistan's constitution declares Ahmadis to be "non-Muslims," and the penal code make it criminal for Ahmadis to refer to themselves as Muslims; preach, propagate, or disseminate materials on their faith; or refer to their houses of worship as mosques.

Pakistan sadly exemplifies another consequence of blasphemy laws: intercommunal and mob violence and vigilantism targeting individuals. For example, in November 2014, Christians **Sajjad Maseeh** and his wife **Shama Bibi** were beaten to death and thrown in a brick kiln after allegations of blasphemy were made against them. In May 2014 Muslim human rights attorney Rashid Rehman was assassinated for defending someone accused of blasphemy.

Saudi Arabia: The government of Saudi Arabia uses criminal blasphemy charges to stifle debate and silence dissent. Saudi Arabia's 2014 counterterrorism law, the Penal Law for Crimes of Terrorism and its Financing, and a series of subsequent royal decrees create a legal framework that criminalizes as terrorism virtually all forms of peaceful dissent and free expression, including criticizing the government's interpretation of Islam or advocating atheism. Under the new law, which went into effect in February 2014, a conviction could result in a prison term ranging from three to 20 years. The Interior Ministry's March 2014 regulations state that, under the new law, terrorism includes "[c]alling for atheist thought in any form, or calling into question the fundamentals of the Islamic religion on which this country is based." While Saudi Shari'ah courts already permit judges to criminalize various forms of peaceful dissent, the new law provides an additional mechanism to classify as terrorism actions considered blasphemous or advocating atheism. Since the law went into effect, some human rights defenders and atheists reportedly have been charged and convicted under the law. For example, in February 2016, a Saudi man reportedly was convicted of denying the existence of God and ridiculing religious beliefs on Twitter and sentenced to 10-years' imprisonment, 2,000 lashes, and a US\$5,300 fine. These prisoners join others, including:

- **Raif Badawi**, the founder and editor of the *Free Saudi Liberals* website that served as an online forum for diverse views to be expressed freely. In June 2015, the Saudi Supreme Court upheld Badawi's sentence of 10 years in prison, 1,000 lashes, and a fine of one million SR

(US\$266,000) for, among other charges, insulting Islam and religious authorities. The sentence called for Badawi to be lashed 50 times a week for 20 consecutive weeks. On January 9, 2015, Badawi received his first set of 50 lashes. Immediately after the flogging was carried out, several governments, including the United States, USCIRF, and numerous international human rights groups and individuals condemned the implementation of the sentence. Badawi has not received additional floggings, due partly to international outrage and a medical doctor's finding that he could not physically endure more lashings. Badawi continues to languish in prison, where he has been held since June 2012.

Additional countries where there were blasphemy investigations or prosecutions in the past few years include Burma, Greece, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Russia, and Turkey. Other blasphemy prisoners highlighted in USCIRF's 2016 Annual Report are:

- From Burma: **Htin Lin Oo**, a former National League for Democracy (NLD) official, was found guilty in June 2015 of insulting religion following an October 2014 speech in which he spoke out against the use of Buddhism for extremism purposes: He was released from prison in April 2016; **Philip Blackwood, Htut Ko Lwin, and Tun Thurein**, three nightclub managers, were sentenced in March 2015 to two-and-a-half years' hard labor for insulting religion after posting online a promotional advertisement depicting Buddha wearing headphones. During the January 2016 prisoner amnesty, Philip Blackwood was released while his two colleagues from Burma remained in prison."
- From Iran: The state holds expressions of unsanctioned religious views and political dissent to be acts of blasphemy. Those arrested for blasphemy generally are charged with "spreading corruption on earth," a broadly defined crime capable of encompassing anything deemed objectionable by the state, which also can result in a death sentence. In addition to Shi'a Muslim dissidents, this charge has been leveled against minority Sunni Muslims, Baha'is, Christians, and Sufis, among others. For example, in August 2015, a revolutionary court sentenced to death **Mohammad Ali Taheri**, a founder of a spiritual movement (*Erfan Halgheh* or Spiritual Circle), for "spreading corruption on earth." In December, the Iranian Supreme Court overturned the death sentence, although he and some of his followers reportedly remain in solitary confinement. In 2011, Taheri previously had been convicted and sentenced to five years in prison and 74 lashes for "insulting religious sanctities" for publishing several books on spirituality.
- From Nigeria: **Abdul Nyass**, a Tijaniyya Sufi Muslim cleric, was sentenced to death by a Kano Shari'ah Court in January for derogatory remarks against the Prophet Mohammed. Five of his followers also were found guilty of blasphemy and sentenced to death: an additional four were acquitted. An appeals court overturned the convictions and sentences of Nyass and his followers in May. The Kano state government said it will appeal this most recent decision.

On June 2, also in Kano, a Christian woman was killed for alleged blasphemous statements against Islam. On June 10, five Muslim men were arrested for the murder.

- From Russia: **Victor Krasnov**, in October 2015, was charged in Stavropol under the 2013 blasphemy law for allegedly publicly insulting Orthodox believers in 2014 by supporting

atheism in social media: his closed preliminary hearing began in January 2016. Krasnov underwent one month of psychiatric examinations in a local hospital and reportedly received death threats from “Orthodox Christian fundamentalists.”

Bangladesh: A Case Study

The Bangladeshi government has used its blasphemy laws, including Section 295A of the penal code and clauses 99 a-f in the Code of Criminal Procedure, to harass and imprison people. Some Bangladeshi political leaders used religiously-divisive language and took actions that have exacerbated religious and communal tensions. Extremist elements have been emboldened to target both religious communities and advocates of secularism with impunity. More than 100,000 Islamic clerics had signed a fatwa, or religious ruling in January 2016 condemning militancy.

Groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), Ansar al Islam, and Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) have claimed responsibility for murdering bloggers, publishers, academics, and religious minorities in Bangladesh in 2015 and 2016 for advocating secularism, freedom of thought, religious and communal tolerance, and political transparency and accountability, and denouncing religious extremism.

ISIL took credit for the massacre of 22 people earlier this month at a restaurant in Dhaka, the deadliest attack since 2013. This attack preceded a bombing at Bangladesh’s largest gathering for the Eid-al-Fitr holiday which killed three people. Earlier attacks targeted atheist bloggers, but later foreigners, minorities, and gay activists. Five bloggers and publishers were assassinated in 2015: Bangladeshi-American Avijit Roy, Washiqur Rahman Babu, Ananta Bijoy Das, Niloy Chatterjee, and Faisal Arefin Dipan. And in the first half of 2016 five individuals were murdered: Nazimuddin Samad, Rezaul Karim Siddique, Xulhaz Mannan, Tanay Majumder and Nikhil Joarder. Lists of other bloggers and publishers marked for assassination, along with those associated with translating, or otherwise disseminating their work, are available widely on the Internet.

Recommendations

USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

- Continue to urge countries to repeal blasphemy laws – especially U.S. allies including those in Europe and the Americas who continue to have such laws on their books but no longer implement them;
- In countries where repeal is unlikely in the short term, such as Pakistan, urge reforms that would help address some of the worst injustices. A step in the right direction would be for the Pakistani government to criminalize false accusations of blasphemy and review all cases of individuals charged with blasphemy and release those subject to abusive charges;
- Continue to support the “Resolution 16/18 approach” at the UN, the 2011 compromise which seeks to combat religious intolerance without restricting speech, and strongly oppose any return to an approach that seeks to create an international anti-blasphemy norm like the prior “defamation of religions” resolutions;

- Work in other international fora to raise concerns about blasphemy laws and advocate for the highest protections for the freedoms of religion and expression;
- Work with civil society actors to promote the freedoms of religion and expression and seek the repeal or reform of blasphemy laws;
- Discuss these laws and their negative effects during delegation trips abroad by Executive Branch officials and Members of Congress, urge governments to hold accountable those who commit acts of violence motivated by accusations of blasphemy; and
- Urge those governments that have imprisoned people on charges of blasphemy to release them unconditionally and, once released, ensure their safety and that of their families.

Finally, Congress should work to repeal or reform blasphemy laws and advocate for the release of blasphemy prisoners through the passage of legislation, including appropriation measures. One such vehicle is H. Res. 290, a bipartisan measure in the House which reflects many of USCIRF's findings and recommendations.

Blasphemy laws truly are a global concern. Simply put, belief should not be policed. By holding this hearing, the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission is underscoring the importance of the freedoms of religion and expression and its support for more speech, rather than the quashing of speech.

Both Congress and the Executive Branch must continue to confront blasphemy laws and the horrific acts they unleash as an assault on human rights and dignity, and press offending nations to repeal these laws, release people imprisoned because of them, and protect those who have been accused.

APPENDIX

Christians of blasphemy charges (in prison) 2010-2015

Sr.	Name	Gender	District	Section	Date	Allegation	Status	Source
01	Imran Ghafur	Male	Faisalabad	295-A & 295-B		Accused of burning pages of the Quran	Sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for 10 years and fined Rs. 100,000	NCJP-HRM-2009-10
02	Ms. Asia Bibi	Female	Nankana Sahib	295-C	08/11/10	Derogatory remarks	Death sentence & Rs. 100,000 fine Applied for bail in SC	NCJP report 2011
03	Sajjad Masih	Male	Pakpattan	295-C PPC	23/12/11	Sent blasphemous mobile messages	life imprisonment and fined Rs. 200,000/- Appealed in LHC	Ahmadiyya Times/NCJP & LEAD
04	Zafar Bhatti and Ghazala Khan	Male/Female	Rawalpindi	295-C PPC	27/07/12	Allegation of sending blasphemous SMS to a Muslim cleric	Arrested/in prison	NCJP
05	Sawan Masih	Male	Lahore	295-C	08/03/13	Used derogatory language about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)	Sentenced to death/in prison	Express Tribune/NCJP
06	Shafqat Emmanuel and Shagufta Kasur	A couple	Gojra/Faisalabad	295-B & C	21/07/13	Sent blasphemous text messages	Sentenced to death/in prison	http://www.christiansinpakistan.com/tag/pakistani-christians/ , NCJP
07	Asif Pervaiz	Male	Lahore	295-A, B & C 25-D telegraph Act	02/10/13	Sent blasphemous text messages	Applied for bail/in prison	NCJP
08	Adnan Masih, (a Pastor)	Male	Lahore	295-A, B & C	12/10/13	Blamed to write derogatory remarks on an Islamic Book named, "Why we became Muslims"	Applied for bail/in prison	Pakistan Christian Post/NCJP

09	Qasir Ayub	Male	Talagang/C hakwal	295-C	15/11/14	Derogatory language against the Prophet (PBUH) on his website	Case registered in 2011, but due to hiding declared absconder by the court in 2012, Then arrested on 14 November, 2014 from Lahore	Express Tribune/NCJP
10	Humayun Masih	Male	Lahore	295C	24/05/15	Burnt Holy Quran	Arrested	NCJP
11	Yaqub Bashir Masih (mentally retarded)	Male	Mirpur Khas	Not known	04/06/15	Burnt a copy of the Holy Quran	Arrested/ under treatment in a hospital	https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2015/06/3889716/ and NCJP
12	Anjum Naz Sindhu	Male	Gujranwala	295-C and 153	19/5/2015	Committed blasphemy	Arrested/ sentenced to death	NCJP/BBC Urdu
13	Javed Naz	Male	Gujranwala	295-C and 153	19/5/2015	Committed blasphemy	Arrested/ sentenced to death and prison for 34 years	NCJP
14	14 persons	Male	Gujrat	295-A	17/08/15	Used the word Rasool (Apostle) for late Pastor Fazal Masih over leaflet, the founder of the Biblical Church of God	3-Arrested	World Watch Monitor

Ahmadis of blasphemy charges (in prison) 2015

Sr.	Name	Gender	District	Section	Date	Allegation	Status	Source
1	Qamar Ahmed Thir	Male	Jhelum	295-B	--	Burning of the Holy Quran	Jailed	HRCP report - 2015

Muslims of blasphemy charges (in prison) 2015

Sr.	Name	Gender	District	Section	Date	Allegation	Status	Source
01	Liaqat Ali & Umar Draz	Male	Lahore	295-C	--	Blasphemous remarks against the Holy Prophet (PBUH)	Awarded death penalty by trial court on 27/3/2009 LHC confirmed the sentence on 17/9/2015	HRCP report 2015
02	Irfan	Male	Gujrat/Sarai Alamgir, Punjab	295-C		Uttering of blasphemous remarks against the Holy Prophet (PBUH)	Awarded death penalty on 3/5/15	HRCP report 2015
03	Amjad bilal & Mukhtar Maroo		Hafizabad	295-C		Firing on a religious gathering	Awarded death penalty by the trial court on 4/7/15	HRCP report 2015
04	Husnain Raza	Male	T.T. Singh			Posting of blasphemous caricature on Facebook	Bail rejected by magistrate in July, 2015	HRCP report 2015
05	Arshad	Male	Hanjarwal, Lahore			Insulting of religious beliefs	arrested	HRCP report 2015
06	Maqsood Ahmad	Male	Daska, Sialkot	295-B		Burning pages of the Holy Quran in a mosque and later in a village chowk	Arrested	HRCP report 2015
07	Liaqat	Male	Lahore	295-C		Addition of their spiritual teachers' name in the Kalma	Awarded death sentence	HRCP report 2015
08	Zulfiqar Ali (mentally sick)	Male	Lahore	295-B		Burning of the Holy Quran	Life imprisonment 5/5/15	HRCP report 2015