

..... 2019

Mr. Imran Khan
Prime Minister
of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
Prime Minister's Secretariat
44000 Islamabad
Pakistan

Dear Prime Minister,

As a member/supporter of ACAT-Switzerland, the Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture and the Death Penalty, I am writing to you on behalf of

Shagufta Kausar and Shafqat Masih,

a married couple who were arrested in July 2013 in Gojra (Punjab) after having allegedly sent “blasphemous” messages to a local cleric. It is believed that the cleric and a friend, as an act of personal revenge, colluded to steal Shagufta’s identity card and personal data to send the blasphemous text under her name. It is also strongly suspected that Shafqat Masih was tortured by the police in order to confess. The accusations are even more appalling as the messages were written in English, although the couple are illiterate and cannot write in Urdu, let alone in English. In 2014, the district Court of Toba Tek Singh sentenced Shagufta Kausar and Shafqat Masih to the death penalty. On 25 June 2019, they were heard on appeal at the High Court of Lahore. Their situation is even more precarious as Shafqat is paralyzed from the waist down and his psychological health has deteriorated since his imprisonment.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) forbids the death penalty for non-serious crimes and guarantees the freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The UN Convention against torture requires from its States Parties to prosecute any author of acts of torture. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is a Party to both Treaties and is thus bound to respect them.

I therefore call on you to ensure that:

- **the charges against Shagufta Kausar and Shafqat Masih are declared null and void, the couple are released unconditionally and, if needs be, are protected against any act of reprisal;**
- **an inquiry is conducted about the allegations of torture perpetrated against Shafqat Masih, and the possible authors are brought to justice;**
- **the Pakistani government abolishes its laws on blasphemy, ceases to harass and prosecute Christians and members of other minorities, and releases all Christians held on blasphemy charges.**

I thank you for the attention you will give to this concern.

Yours respectfully,

Copy: Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Bernastrasse 47, 3005 Bern

ACAT-Switzerland is a politically neutral and independent human rights organisation affiliated to the International Federation of ACAT (FIACAT), which has consultative status with the United Nations and participative Status with the Council of Europe.