

Pakistan: Christian woman arrested

Asia Bibi, a 37-year-old Pakistani woman from the village of Ittanwali, was arrested by police on Friday, June 19, and faces possible blasphemy charges. Asia is the wife of 50-year-old Ashiq Masih, and their family is one of only three Christian families in a village of more than 1,500 families.



Many of the local women work on the farm of Muslim landowner Muhammad Idrees, including Asia. During their work many of the Muslim women have pressured Asia to renounce Christianity and accept Islam. Over the past week the pressure has been especially strong.

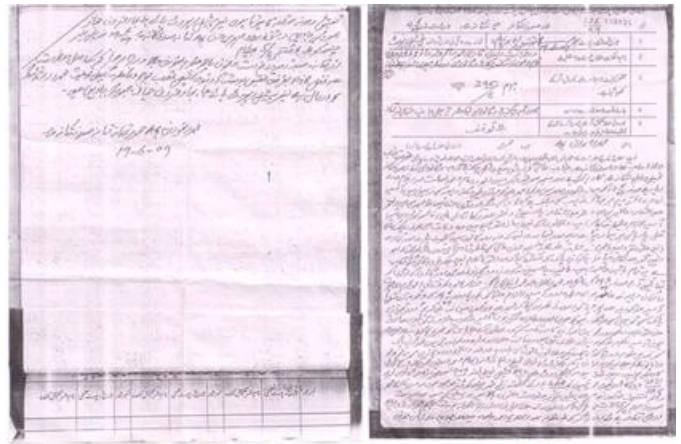
On Friday, June 19, there was an intense discussion among the women about their faith, with the Muslim women telling Asia about Islam. Asia responded by telling them about her faith in Christ.



Asia told the Muslim women that Christ had died on the cross for our sins, then asked them what Mohammed had done for them, according to VOM sources. She told them Jesus is alive, but Mohammed is dead. "Our Christ is the true prophet of God," she reportedly told them, "and yours is not true."

Upon hearing this response the Muslim women became angry and began to beat Asia Bibi. Then some men came and took her and locked her in a room. They announced from mosque loudspeakers that she would be punished by having her face blackened and being paraded through the village on a donkey.

Local Christians informed the police, who took Asia into custody before the Muslims could carry out their plan. She is currently being held at the police station in Nankana city. Christians there urged the police not to file blasphemy charges, but police claimed that they must go forward due to pressure from local Muslim leaders.



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The Voice of the Martyrs urges Christians around the world to pray for Asia Bibi and her family. Further, we call on the Pakistani government to insure that the rights of Christians like Asia are protected.

The Voice of the Martyrs' sources are actively investigating the case, as well as providing support to local Christians. More information will be posted at www.persecution.com as it becomes available.

