

Asia Bibi — Alive, But Not Free

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Freedom of religion and freedom of speech are generally taken for granted in Canada; we don't treasure them as we ought. But hearing about the experiences of people in other countries can give us a fresh appreciation for what we have.

Can you imagine someone being punished for blasphemy in Canada? Hardly. Can you imagine the death penalty or eight years in prison for insulting a religion or a religious figure?

A death sentence for alleged blasphemy seems unbelievable to us. So harsh and unjust that we might think this story was fabricated.

But it wasn't. In Pakistan, blasphemy charges are taken seriously, and eight years ago, a mother of four named Asia Bibi was charged with insulting Mohammed—a charge she has consistently denied—based on the testimony of one man. She was put on death row where she remained for eight years! Her plight has become an international story.

In just the last few days, the courts in Pakistan acquitted her of the charges¹ and released her from prison. There were reports soon after that she would be allowed to leave Pakistan, but so far this has proved to be untrue.

It appears that she has been taken to another part of Pakistan. While she is no longer in prison on death row, she is still in grave danger. Unfortunately, many in Pakistan still support its strict blasphemy laws and harsh punishments.

Many of us in Canada have signed a petition² calling for Asia's release; meanwhile, mobs in Pakistan were rioting and calling for her to be hanged! Different ideologies lead to different conclusions. This is a story that Canada must learn from.

Christians and Ahmadi Muslims are persecuted religious minorities in Pakistan. Here in Canada, we recognize the right of majorities to form governments but we deny the use of that power to persecute minorities.

CHP Canada stands for freedom of religion, and for freedom of speech. Without freedom of speech, we cannot defend any other rights and freedoms. Join your voice with ours in calling for Asia Bibi to be freed. Join us as we stand against persecution and for freedom of thought, religion, and speech.

Footnotes

¹ www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-46130189

² www.citizenngo.org/en-ca/node/166598

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