



Pakistan: Blasphemy Law “Categorically Excluded” from Reform

The campaign in Pakistan against Parliamentarian Sherry Rehman is emphasizing the same brutal aspect of Islamic law which was written in blood at the time of the assassination of Governor Salman Taseer: Any politician who opposes the imposition of the death penalty for blasphemy has “proven” that they too are guilty of blasphemy.



When Taseer, the governor of Punjab, was murdered earlier this year by one of his bodyguards, his death was lauded by many Muslims in Pakistan because he had favored clemency for a Christian woman, Asia Bibi, whom he believed has been falsely convicted of blasphemy against Mohammed. Bibi was facing the death penalty, and Taseer hoped that the President would consider sparing her life. The murder of Taseer demonstrated that many of the factions [previously believed to be examples of “moderate” Muslim influence](#) within Pakistani society were, in fact, committed to exterminating those who spoke against Mohammed, or the tenets of Islam.

[As reported for *The New American* on February 7](#), Rehman had attempted to reform Pakistan’s penal code to eliminate the death penalty as the punishment for blaphemy; she abandoned that effort, however, when not even her own political party, the Pakistan People’s Party, would support her legislation.

However, the murder of Taseer and Rehman’s legislative surrender were not enough to appease the Islamists, who brought blasphemy charges against Rehman on account of her effort to amend the penal code. According to [a February 17 article](#) for *Agenzia Fides*, formal charges of blasphemy were entered in a court in Multan against Rehman; a shopkeeper claimed she was guilty of blasphemy on account of televised comments from November 2010. In the words of the *Agenzia Fides* report:

The local police, for now, have declared her legally incompetent. In recent weeks there have been other attempts to incriminate her but other Pakistani courts have refused to give authorisation.? This news creates “discouragement and deep concern within the Christian community” which, as a local source of *Fides* confirms, sees its fears being realised: that it has gone beyond the idea of defining “blasphemous,” and therefore, anyone who opposes the law on blasphemy can be incriminated.



Written by [James Heiser](#) on February 23, 2011

According to [a story published by AsiaNews.it](#), Judge Mehr Nasir Hussain “instructed the police to open an investigation and prepare a report, with the possible sources of evidence. Once the facts were verified, the police officer Yousaf Khokhar explained that ‘the matter does not fall into cases of blasphemy’ because ‘a close analysis of the video, shows there are no violations of the law.’ On the advise [sic] of the investigators, the court decided to dismiss the case.” However, the entire incident—which would seem absurd even after the most cursory examination — highlighted the central fact that the blasphemy law remains firmly in place; as AsiaNew.it observed, “Yousaf Raza Gilani, Prime Minister of Pakistan, ‘categorically excluded’ amendments to the law on blasphemy.”

Pakistan’s blood negation of even the most elementary protection for religious minorities is an immovable foundation of Sharia-influenced law in Pakistan. As the “dominoes” of semi-secularized states continue to fall throughout the Islamic nations of North Africa and the Middle East, it is clear that the government of Pakistan does not want to be the next regime facing angry mobs for whom “democracy” would once again [be a step on the road to the caliphate](#).

Photo: U. S. Senator John Kerry, left, meets Pakistan’s Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani in Islamabad, Pakistan on Feb. 16, 2011: AP Images



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