

Pakistani Muslims Beat Elderly Christian Couple Unconscious

An 80-year-old Christian in southern Punjab Province said Muslims beat him and his 75-year-old wife, breaking his arms and legs and her skull, because he refused a prostitute they had offered him.

From his hospital bed in Vehari, Emmanuel Masih told Compass by telephone that two powerful Muslim land owners in the area, brothers Muhammad Malik Jutt and Muhammad Khaliq Jutt, accompanied by two other unidentified men, brought a prostitute to his house on Oct. 8. Targeting him as a Christian on the premise that he would not have the social status to fight back legally, the men ordered him to have sex with the woman at his residence in village 489-EB, he said.

"I turned down the order of the Muslim land owners, which provoked the ire of those four Muslim men," Masih said in a frail voice. District Headquarters Hospital (DHQ) Vehari officials confirmed that he suffered broken hip, arm and leg bones in the subsequent attack.

His wife, Inayatan Bibi, said she was cleaning the courtyard of her home when she heard the four furious men brutally striking Masih in her house.

"I tried to intervene to stop them and pleaded for mercy, and they also thrashed me with clubs and small pieces of iron rods," she said by telephone.

The couple was initially rushed to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Burewala in critical condition, but doctors there turned them away at the behest of the Jutt brothers, according to the couple's attorney, Rani Berkat. Burewala hospital

officials confirmed the denial of medical care.

Taken to the hospital in Vehari, Inayat Bibi was treated for a fractured skull. The beatings had left both her and her husband unconscious.

Berkat said the Muslim assailants initially intimidated Fateh Shah police into refraining from filing charges against them. After intervention by Berkat and Albert Patras, director of human rights group Social Environment Protection, police reluctantly registered a case against the Jutt brothers and two unidentified accomplices for attempted murder and "assisting to devise a crime." The First Information Report (FIR) number is 281/10.

Station House Officer Mirza Muhammad Jamil of the Fateh Shah police station declined to speak with Compass about the case. Berkat said Jamil told her that the suspects would be apprehended and that justice would be served.

Berkat added, however, that police appeared to be taking little action on the case, and that therefore she had filed an application in the Vehari District and Sessions Court for a judge to direct Fateh Shah police to add charges of ransacking to the FIR.

Doctors at DHQ Vehari said the couple's lives were no longer in danger, but that they would be kept under observation.