

Christian Man Beaten for Taking 2 Extra Days Off After Easter

The Organization for Legal Aid (OLA), the European Centre for Law and Justice's (ECLJ) affiliate in Pakistan, is demanding justice for a Christian farmhand, Saleem Masih, who was severely beaten by his Muslim employer's sons for taking two extra days off of work after Easter. The local police have not registered the case yet, and Saleem is being pressured by the Muslims to not press charges against them.

The incident occurred the morning of April 23 when Saleem's employer's son, Muhammad Abbas Mayo, broke into Saleem's house and began beating Saleem with a club while he was asleep. Abbas dragged Saleem out of the house and continued to beat him. Saleem's wife intervened, but Abbas also beat her and tore her shirt in public.

Abbas took Saleem to his farmhouse, where his brother, Muhammad Sajid Mayo, was waiting. Abbas and Sajid continued to severely beat Saleem. Saleem's family pleaded with the brothers to spare him, but Abbas and Sajid took Saleem to their fields for forced labor. Saleem's employer and the father of the culprits, Abdul Haq, arrived at the farmhouse and intervened and took Saleem to a doctor for treatment.

On April 24, OLA filed an application with the Saddar Police Station to press charges against Abbas and Sajid, but the police did not register the case. That same day, a medical examination was done from Kasur, District Headquarters Hospital. The Medico-Legal certificate issued by the doctor describes Saleem's eight injuries, including bruise and contusion injuries. Other possible injuries are to be determined after the doctor receives Saleem's X-ray report

back from the radiology department.

OLA has filed a petition under Section 22-A and 22-B of Pakistan's criminal procedure code to ensure Saleem's case is registered. Under these sections, judges have powers to order the police to arrest the perpetrators and register formal charges against them. The hearing on the petition is set for May 24. After the judge's orders, Abbas will be charged under Section 354-A of Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) for the assault of Saleem's wife and for stripping her of her clothes. Abbas will also be charged under PPC Section 452 for house trespass after preparation for assault. Additionally, the brothers will be liable under PPC Section 337 for assaulting Saleem.

Physical torture by employers of their employees, such as Saleem experienced, is all too common in the laboring industries of Pakistan. It is often the religious minorities, who have become a social underclass in Pakistan, who must work in such conditions. Many of these workers are indebted to their employers due to historic debt and essentially become bonded laborers.

These workers are often paid well below minimum wage and do not have any formal contract of employment. They are regularly threatened and subjected to physical abuse by their employers. Workers are often threatened and coerced from attempting legal redress or physical escape. If they try to break away from their bondage, they are beaten, killed, harassed or implicated in fake cases by their employers.

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