

Disabled Pakistani Girl Accused of Blasphemy

Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari has ordered an investigation into the arrest of a disabled girl in his nation. The case stems from an incident involving a young girl who reportedly has Down syndrome.

"She has been accused of burning pages in a Quran, and that led to a **radical Muslim** mob marching in her village demanding her arrest—even some of them shouting to kill the coffers or kill the infidel," says Todd Nettleton with Voice of the Martyrs.

Ramsha, whose last name is being withheld by authorities to protect her family, has been taken into custody. But Nettleton says there are still many questions that need to be answered: "How did this girl come to be in the possession of burned pages, and were those pages even a Quran? I have seen some reports that said, 'Yes, there was Arabic writing on the paper, but not actually from a Quran.'"

The disabled girl's arrest is another example of Pakistan's controversial blasphemy law. Nettleton says the law "produces such swift arrest and punishment that often times the punishment comes before the facts are actually known."

But because this has become a high-profile case, Nettleton is hopeful: "The president of the country is saying we need to investigate this fully. Hopefully that improves the chances that they really will get to the bottom and discover what the facts of the case are."

This case didn't just affect the girl and her family, Nettleton says. All of the Christians in this particular village had left because they were frightened. He explains, "There was an angry Muslim mob marching through the village

shouting what they were going to do to Christians. There's some work going on now to try to make it safe for them to come back to their homes."

What does this mean for **religious freedom** in Pakistan?

"There is a great understanding among the Christians in Pakistan that if you choose to evangelize, you are taking a risk," Nettleton says. "You are doing something that is very daring in that culture and in that society."

Nettleton is asking for **prayer**: "We need to **pray** for justice for this family. We need to pray for those who had to flee their homes and for all of the Christians in Pakistan that they will continue to serve Christ, even to the point of evangelizing, despite the risks that that brings."