

# Pastor Arrested, Threatened Over Blasphemy Accusation

A Pakistani Christian pastor has been arrested, and his extended family threatened, because he expressed his faith. The European Centre for Law and Justice's (ECLJ) international affiliate is taking action, offering legal representation to the Christians.

Fifty-five-year old Pastor Karman Patras, a resident of Sangla Hill, Pakistan, was arrested on Oct. 13 for allegedly speaking out against the Islamic ritual of sacrifice. After Patras' arrest, his five married sons, and their families, were ordered to leave their village. While Patras is languishing in prison, these five families are searching for shelter and food. A legal team from the Center for Law and Justice (CLJ), an affiliate of the ECLJ, visited Patras' village and discovered the following facts.

The police have charged Patras under Section 295-A of the Pakistan Penal Code that criminalizes "outraging religious feelings." The police sent Patras to the Sheikhpura District Jail after conducting an investigation. On Oct. 30, he appeared before a magistrate to request that bail be set. After hearing his bail plea, the magistrate refused the plea.

The police are expected to submit their investigation report before the magisterial court within days and then the trial will commence. In Pakistan, a trial can go on for years, and even then, lower courts do not decide **blasphemy** cases on the merits out of fear of reprisal from religious groups. At the same time, courts refuse to grant bail to those accused of blasphemy, which in turn, causes the accused to spend years in prison.

Here is what landed this Christian pastor in jail: On Oct. 13,

Patras was invited to address a funeral gathering in the nearby village of Mehmandwali, Chak 111-R-B. Patras addressed the gathering at the bereaved family's house by sharing Jesus Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection. Patras did not know that there were some Muslims sitting in the gathering. Patras' message, the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, which is different from the Islamic view of eternal death and hope, caused great anger among these Muslims. They fiercely objected to Patras' sermon and even tried to attack him. However, there were many Christians present who were able to keep the situation under control.

That same day, after Patras returned home to his village, some Muslims from the adjacent village, Mehmandwali, began calling his cell phone and asking him to meet them in their village. Patras gathered a few Christians from his village to accompany him, but before they could set off for Mehmandwali, the police arrived and arrested Patras. After the arrest, a mob of Muslim men surrounded the police station and demanded that the police hand over Patras to them, but he had already been transferred to another location at that point.

After Patras' arrest, local Muslims told his five sons to leave the village or else they would be set on fire. The Christian community in the village, which consists of about 20 families, wept for the evicted families as they loaded their belongings onto tractor trolleys. Since leaving the village, these families are without shelter and food.