

Persecuted Christian Says He's Being Denied Refugee Status Despite Muslims Trying to Kill Him

Faraz Pervaiz, a Christian refugee who escaped to Bangkok, Thailand, from Pakistan after being accused of blasphemy, says that his continued attempts to obtain asylum have been denied repeatedly. Furthermore, he claims he was attacked by at least one Muslim several weeks ago because of the blasphemy charges against him.

Pervaiz tells Charisma News that on Dec. 23, he was attacked while shopping at a local Indian shop. He says a Muslim refugee assaulted him, "declaring that I needed to die because I was blasphemous. With the assistance of the Indian shopkeeper, I was able to escape."

Pervaiz shared with Charisma News a copy of a medical certification showing he had been examined and treated on Christmas Day with a diagnosis of an "abrasion wound and contusion [sic] due to body assault."

This attack is one of many attempts in which radical Muslims have targeted Pervaiz's family, he says.

Pervaiz, coordinator of The Refuge of David Mission Asia, has been requesting asylum since July 2019, when a woman named Saira Ismail ousted his address in a viral video and called on fellow Muslims to go to Bangkok to kill him.

After receiving death threats over the phone, Pervaiz says, he and his family moved to a secret location.

He has repeatedly requested refugee status with the UNHCR

office in Bangkok but with no success.

The Pervaiz family originally fled from Pakistan after riots broke out and people began calling for Faraz Pervaiz's death because he spoke out against Islamic ideology in 2013 through his YouTube vlog. He says that during that time, an increased number of bloggers were disappearing after speaking critically of Pakistan and Islam. Several videos were released calling for Pervaiz's murder.

Pervaiz fled the country in 2014 and took refuge in Bangkok, but his safety was once again put in jeopardy in when Ismail released her video and revealed Pervaiz's location.

"As an asylum seeker trying to reopen my case with the UNHCR in Bangkok I am afforded no protection," Pervaiz tells Charisma News. "My family is limited to what protections we can receive in Thailand, and as some of our family members have already been arrested and detained for overstaying their visas, we have a very reasonable fear of seeking protection which could then result in other family members being detained. While the UNHCR is aware of our case and threats against us, we are far more vulnerable because we have not been approved for refugee status."

Pervaiz says that if he and his family are not resettled into a third country, their lives will continue to be in danger.

"As a family, we only have two options currently: To remain in Thailand in hiding from those that threaten us, and in constant fear that our immigration status will cause us to be arrested, or we can return to Pakistan where we will undoubtedly be arrested for having spoken our religious views publicly," he says.

With the support of Australian Jesuit the Rev. Michael Kelly, Pervaiz requested asylum from the Australian government. After Australia denied Pervaiz's request, he made a similar request to Canadian ambassador Donica Pottie in Bangkok, again with

Kelly's support.

But Pervaiz tells Charisma News that the UNHCR still does not recognize him as a refugee. Furthermore, he claims his requests for asylum and refugee status are being denied because UNHCR employees are misquoting his statements.

"The UN is not protecting me because UNHCR is hijacked by Muslims," he says.

UNHCR Associate External Relations Officer Jennifer Harrison tells Charisma News that the UNHCR could not directly respond to Pervaiz's claims—or even confirm the existence of his request for refugee status—due to confidentiality and data protection reasons.

But Harrison did offer the following statement:

"In general, not every asylum-seeker is necessarily a refugee. We conduct in-depth interviews to determine who is and is not a refugee according to the refugee definition in international law. Furthermore, UNHCR adheres to strict procedural standards in its Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process, including a review of all RSD decisions in the first instance. Each claim is assessed on its own merit and rejected asylum-seekers at first instance have the right to appeal. During the appeal stage, all breaches of procedural fairness are assessed, including, for example, inadequate interpretation as well as concerns regarding the real or perceived conduct or profile of staff. It is important to note that at all stages of the process different staff are assigned to assess and review the case so as to avoid any potential conflicts of interest.

"All staff, including interpreters, are required to adhere to a Code of Conduct which sets the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct. All UNHCR interpreters are trained to interpret questions and answers verbatim, with objectivity. They also undergo ethics, cultural sensitivity and code of conduct trainings, as do all UNHCR staff. UNHCR also records

interviews to increase efficiency and oversight. Furthermore, UNHCR investigates any complaints against interpreters or other staff promptly and have a zero-tolerance policy with respect to bias or discrimination.”

Pastor Rudy Navarro, who leads a small church called El Refugio de David (The Refuge of David) in Chicago, has been supporting Pervaiz and his family while they hide in Bangkok.

Navarro says he and Pervaiz have been working together to create videos to expose the persecution against Pakistani Christians in Asia.

“We have had a beautiful brotherhood with Faraz, and we have been worried about his safety and, on occasions, for the health of his family,” Navarro tells Charisma News (quote translated from Spanish).

Navarro says right now he is trying to gather funds to help move Pervaiz and his family to a home in another province.
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For more stories of the persecution of Christians, check out the Charisma e-book, Faces of the Persecuted Church, available at this link for just \$.99.