



Member of the European Parliament

To: H.E. Mamnoon Hussain
President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Date: 8 March 2017

SUBJECT: TRIAL OF ASIA BIBI

Honourable President,

I am writing to you about a subject close to my heart, blasphemy laws, religious discrimination, and more specifically, the case of Asia Bibi. I know you also care deeply about these issues. As President, you have a crucial role to play in defending the rights and wellbeing of your country's citizens. You also hold powers to confirm judicial appointments and to grant pardons.

At the European Parliament, we deeply respect your country's path to democracy. We value your commitment to development for your people, the fight against extremism and our cooperation on these matters. It is from this perspective of respect and partnership that I would like to raise the issue of the trial of Asia Bibi.

It has now been more than six years since Ms Bibi received a death sentence for presumed blasphemy. At every stage of the judicial procedure, there have been delays, most recently when Justice Iqbal Hameed ur Rehman recused himself at the start of a much-delayed Supreme Court trial hearing on 13 October 2016. All these years, Ms Bibi's family has lived separated and in fear, with their lives put on hold and in constant danger.

I am well aware of the sensitivities of this case in your country. Nobody wants more deadly violence over a possible conclusion of this case. But Asia Bibi is not the cause of these tensions.

Honourable President, I sincerely believe that Pakistan's blasphemy legislation, in its current form and implementation, does serious injustice to a great country. I believe it runs counter to Pakistan's founding principles as formulated in your constitution, including freedom of religion.

This legislation, which is supposed to protect and safeguard, has instead drenched large parts of Pakistan's society in fear. This fear is very real for Pakistan's many religious minorities, but even for its majority communities. Any misstep, any quarrel, any envious colleague or



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neighbour may result in chaos, bloodshed and for the accused, their family and community, years of misery and endless proceedings.

Honourable President, I urge you to use the powers granted to you by the Constitution of Pakistan and to bring the trial of Asia Bibi to a close. If you would do this, it would greatly encourage your country's minority communities. It would send a powerful signal to those that abuse your country's laws. It would be an act of justice that would resonate around the world.

Yours sincerely,

Syed Kamall

Member of the European Parliament for London, United Kingdom

Chairman of the Conservatives and Reformists in the European Parliament

Peter van Dalen

Member of the European Parliament for the Netherlands

Co-chair of the European Parliament Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance

Cc:

Jean-François Cautain

Ambassador, Delegation of the European Union to Pakistan