

Pakistan court sentences Christian man to death

From [Dawn](#), English language newspaper of Pakistan

A Pakistani court on Tuesday sentenced a Christian man to death on blasphemy charges.

Asif Pervaiz, 37, has been in custody since 2013 fighting blasphemy charges that were levelled against him by the supervisor of the garment factory he once worked at. The supervisor had accused him of sending derogatory remarks about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to him in a text message.

The court order issued by Additional Sessions Judge Mansoor Ahmad Qureshi, seen by *Reuters*, said Pervaiz would first serve a three-year prison term for “misusing” his phone to send the derogatory text message. Then “he shall be hanged by his neck till his death.” He was also fined Rs50,000, the order said.

His lawyer Saif-ul-Malook told Reuters he would appeal the sentence. “This case should have been thrown out by the judge,” Malook said, adding he would appeal the verdict in the Lahore High Court. “He has already spent seven years awaiting the court’s decision. Who knows how many more years he will have to wait till this is over?”

Pervaiz claims his supervisor, who had been trying to convert him to Islam, had accused him of blasphemy after he quit his factory job. The complainant’s lawyer, Murtaza Chaudhry, denied this was the case.

Human rights groups say blasphemy laws are often misused to persecute minorities or even against Muslims to settle personal rivalries. Such accusations can end up in lynchings or street vigilantism.

Up to 80 people are known to be imprisoned in the country on such charges – half of whom face life in prison or the death penalty – according to the US Commission on International Religious Freedom.

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