

Where Can Asia Bibi Go? (Part Two)

by Hugh Fitzgerald



As for weaponry, the Pontifical Guards have the Sig P220 semi automatic pistol as their standard issue. It is made by famed firearms manufacturer Sig Sauer, and has one of the best reputations for reliability and quality. (Today, the Navy SEALs are known for their similar Sig Sauer P226 pistols). The Swiss Guard also uses Austrian-built Glock 19 pistols for deep concealment.

For heavier hitting longer-range modern firepower, the Swiss Guard has an array of Sig SG550 series assault rifles in different configurations. This includes some with short barrels and folding stocks (Sig SG552 Commando) for close-quarters battle (CQB) and vehicle carry, and others with longer barrels and scope setups for extended range engagements. They also have the Heckler & Koch MP7 personal defense weapon (PDW) that fires armor piercing small caliber

rifle rounds. This weapon is extremely popular with elite units ranging from SEAL Team Six to presidential protection units around the globe. It would take too long to list all of their top-of-the-line weapons, but the point has been made: they are not relying on defending the Pope with those ceremonial halberds. They are as well-equipped as any comparable guard unit anywhere in the world. The Pope cannot claim he lacks the ability to protect Asia Bibi.

Asia Bibi is now, and will be as long as she lives, a standing reproach to the world's Muslims, who stood by while she was first charged, and then convicted, of "blasphemy," and who, during the past eight years of her monstrous imprisonment, have not raised the matter even once with any Pakistani official, nor at meetings of the O.I.C. Their silence signaled Islamic solidarity with the original persecutors of Asia Bibi. And her travails in not finding a final refuge are a standing reproach to the world's non-Muslims as well.

The Pope could now do the very thing he usually calls on others to do: welcome this desperate asylum seeker. For he should be reminded of his own words, when in October 2016 he said "it is hypocritical to call yourself a Christian and to chase away a refugee, or anyone who needs your help." He should, as both a simple Christian and as the Vicar of Christ, become the one protector who did not turn her down. The Pope could learn a lot about "authentic Christianity" from this martyr for her faith, and learn, too, about "authentic Islam" which millions of hate-filled rioters in Pakistan believe they are upholding when they bay for Bibi's blood.

So let the request for asylum be made quite publicly by Asia Bibi to the Pope. A martyr for her faith, she might have avoided the charge of blasphemy, and saved herself from the death sentence, and the eight years in prison waiting for the sentence to be carried out, had she at the very beginning been willing to convert to Islam. But Asia Bibi was unwilling to leave the Christian faith. The Pope will have a hard time

turning her away from his door, as Christ would never have done. And if he does that, he will have lost all moral authority – for those who think he still has any to lose – and be unable to pontificate, as has been his wont, on the need for the West to welcome migrants.

So let us imagine that the Pope offers, and Asia Bibi accepts, his permission for her to live at Vatican City, under his protection. He will be subject to every sort of abuse from Muslims, including death threats – which have already been coming his way from Muslims unaware of how supportive he has been of what he calls “authentic Islam.” He will now expose him to the threats of Muslim fanatics, the very people whom he has managed to overlook so far in his incessant reproaching of the West. And Asia Bibi herself, of course, will continue to be subject to the same death threats she had been receiving in Pakistan.

Asia Bibi’s request for asylum in Vatican City would be salutary, whether that request is accepted or turned down. If the Pope turns her away, his own hypocrisy will be exposed, and he will no longer be able to lecture or hector the West for its “un-Christian” behavior toward mostly-Muslim migrants. He will be permanently shamed by his stunning failure to follow his own prescriptions.

If he grants her asylum, on the other hand, Pope Francis will be rescuing a high-profile Christian victim of Muslim persecution, putting the cruel application of Islamic “blasphemy” laws front and center on the world’s agenda, and in offering Bibi shelter, he will be taking a stand against those unjust laws himself. He will no longer be seen as the Defender of Islam that he has too often appeared to be. His own eyes might open wider as he learns more about the mistreatment of Christians and other non-Muslims, based on Qur’anic commands, and finds out about other asia-bibis, some of them imprisoned, with others martyred – put to death – for their faith, all over the Muslim-ruled lands. And if he could

take in that knowledge, make sense of it, study the Qur'an and hadith – a tall order for this Pope who clearly has not felt the need – and manage to grasp how Muslims regard non-Muslims, as his more learned predecessor Pope Benedict did, he might help in the long struggle to save Europe, Christian and post-Christian, from the Jihad that now threatens it, and that so far Europe's political and media elites have failed to recognize, out of fear of offending the tens of millions of Muslims already in their midst.

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