



# Report on Sargodha Incident

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A Comprehensive Report Compiled by the National (Catholic) Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP), Documenting Incident, Subsequent Actions, and Recommendations for Safeguarding Religious Minorities in Pakistan.

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**NATIONAL (CATHOLIC) COMMISSION FOR  
JUSTICE & PEACE**

## NCJP Overview

National Commission for Justice and Peace is a human rights body, established by the Pakistan Catholic Bishops' Conference in 1985. As an advocacy organisation, the Commission focuses on the human rights of the marginalized, especially religious minorities, women, children, and labour in Pakistan, which involves interventions regarding awareness, opinion building about law, and policy reforms.

## Persistent Violence Against Christians in Pakistan and Government's Unfulfilled Demands for Protection

NCJP has been documenting the situation of religious minorities in its annual report since 1997, the Human Rights Monitor (updated HRM 2024),<sup>1</sup> and reported a series of incidents, of violent mob incidents, including those in Shanti Nagar (1997), Sangla Hill (2005), Lahore (2006, 2013, 2015, 2016), Karachi (2008), Gojra (2009), the assassination of Shahbaz Bhatti (2011), Gujranwala (2011), Mardan (2012), Multan (2014), Kasur (2014), Jaranwala (2023), and Sargodha (2024). Sadly, over the years, these incidents have left a trail of bloodshed in the Christian community. Such mob attacks become the trend in Pakistan to impose their own decision on the victims as per their understanding. Only the place, date, and community are changed and the new victims are targeted. This is due to the lack of effective action by the authorities and legislative bodies.

The Pakistan Commission for Human Rights has previously urged the government to

develop a policy and strategy to prevent organized extremist groups from undermining state authority, particularly through enhanced law enforcement measures. The commission specifically called on the Punjab government to implement the recommendations from the judicial inquiry into the 2009 Gojra<sup>2</sup> attacks and demanded strict action against hate speech and actions. Additionally, the commission emphasized the need for immediate rehabilitation of victims and reconstruction of damaged properties. It also called for the formation of a dedicated police force to protect religious minorities and their places of worship, as per the Supreme Court's 2014 decision. However, these demands remain unfulfilled to date.

## Sargodha Incident

Yet again, following the persistent violence, on the 25th of May 2024, an appalling incident unfolded in Sargodha, Pakistan, targeting and assaulting another Christian family with false allegations of blasphemy.<sup>3</sup> The incident transpired in Gillwala Mujahid Colony, where a sizable mob converged and attacked the residence of Nazir (Lazar) Masih and his son Sultan Masih, following allegations that they had deliberately burnt pages of the Holy Quran. An announcement to this effect was reportedly made from a local mosque, inciting a mob of approximately 2,000 people to gather outside the adjoining homes of Nazir and Sultan Masih, demanding they be put to death. Despite efforts by law enforcement, only nine members of the besieged family could be safely displaced. However, Nazir Masih fell

<sup>1</sup>[https://drive.google.com/file/d/133QNG3Vp76aI6jmT8jW\\_vJ0em03nSIMX/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/133QNG3Vp76aI6jmT8jW_vJ0em03nSIMX/view?usp=drive_link)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.punjab.gov.pk/gojra\\_incident\\_2009](https://www.punjab.gov.pk/gojra_incident_2009)

<sup>3</sup><https://youtu.be/SPPPtPPuvE?si=OWG86RnHkiEUunsl>

victim to the mob's brutality, enduring severe beatings before succumbing to the violence.

### National (Catholic) Commission for Justice & Peace and its Stakeholders' Actions <sup>4</sup>

NCJP strongly condemned the incident and released a press statement on May 26, 2024 and demanded, *“the Punjab Police and the district administration to ensure the security of the Christian community and bring the perpetrators to justice, emphasizing that swift and impartial justice must be served to restore faith in the legal system. They called for a judicial inquiry led by Dr. Shoaib Suddle to determine the responsibility for the mob attack and to hold police officials accountable for their inaction. Additionally, they demanded that no false blasphemy charges be registered against any Christian and that protection be provided to them. They also insisted on prompt compensation for the damage to the house and factory.”*

While, His Lordship, Archbishop Dr. Joseph Arshad on 26 May 2024, brought together the political and religious leadership in Sargodha to condemn the horrific attacks in the local Christian community.



The delegation, led by Archbishop Dr. Joseph Arshad along with Mr Tahir Khalil Sindhu, comprising religious and political leadership, met the law enforcement agencies and (DPO Dr. Asad Ejaz) demanded complete protection and justice for Nazir Masih's family and the local Christian community.



A delegation from the National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP), led by Mr. Naem Yousaf Gill, (Executive Director), and Mr Behram Francis, (Coordinator for Legal Aid), Nazir Masih's (also known as Lazar Masih) family for solidarity and extending further support.



<sup>4</sup>[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1NaZVDs6RaD4VFis8f2d1rau9B3E5pnKF?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1NaZVDs6RaD4VFis8f2d1rau9B3E5pnKF?usp=drive_link)

## Fact-Finding

Nazir Masih was a well-to-do resident and had lived abroad for many years, visiting Sargodha periodically. He had two sons, Sultan Masih living next door and another son, Ilyas Masih, living abroad. According to Irfan Gill, (Nazir Masih's nephew), a conflict began some years ago over a drainage issue, and off and on his grandsons would get into fights with the local Muslim community. Three days prior to the incident, Nazir's grandsons (19 and 21-year-old) got into a fight with a Muslim neighbour (Ayub, a dairyman). Ayub allegedly had a grudge against Nazir's family, who are relatively well-off, and his shoe business was doing quite well. There was also a level of jealousy towards this Christian family. According to the sources, Nazir's grandsons filed a complaint with the local police regarding the fight.

Reportedly, on 25 May, Nazir Masih woke up early as usual and swept the area outside his house. He then burnt fallen leaves and other rubbish near a water pump and went home. Shortly thereafter, an announcement was made from a nearby mosque, attributed to Manzar Abbas, calling upon residents to assemble outside the residences of Nazir Masih and Sultan Masih on grounds of alleged blasphemy. The residents allegedly received WhatsApp messages echoing this call to action. The announcement and messages implicated Nazir and Sultan Masih in the deliberate burning of pages from the Holy Quran while disposing of rubbish.

Consequently, an inflamed crowd, armed with rocks, sticks, and petrol bombs, gathered outside the adjacent homes of the Masih family. Their demand for retribution included demanding family be put to death. The allegation itself was made by one Ayub Gondal, Nazir Masih's neighbour.<sup>5</sup>

The unrest worsened when a mob gathered outside the residence of the accused in Mujahid Colony, destroying property, including a shoe factory and their house. The situation escalated into clashes with the police, despite efforts to control the situation. Nazir Masih, a 72-year-old Christian man, sustained severe head injuries. According to NCJP sources, Lazar Masih was shifted to CMH Rawalpindi, where he was in critical condition

and subsequently died after undergoing multiple surgeries. His death has sparked further tensions and highlighted the vulnerability of religious minorities in Pakistan.<sup>6</sup>



<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPPtoPPuvE>

<sup>6</sup> [https://youtu.be/624z1wNt95k?si=2jpakGw0t\\_A3Q\\_Sbw](https://youtu.be/624z1wNt95k?si=2jpakGw0t_A3Q_Sbw)

## First Information Report (FIRs)

The first FIR<sup>7</sup> was lodged against Nazir Masih on May 25, 2024 under Sec. 295A and 295B of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) along with Sec. 9 of the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 on grounds of ‘sectarian hatred’. This FIR was registered at 08.30 and is based on the verbal statement of one Muhammad Jahangir, a resident of Mujahid Colony and a councilor of the local municipal corporation. Jahangir claims that, at about 07.00, he exited his residence on hearing a noise in the street and witnessed Nazir Masih ‘defiling the Quran’ by setting pages alight. Jahangir also claims that one Muhammad Irfan Gondal [Ayub Gondal’s son] and Muhammad Akram witnessed the alleged offence, following which Nazir Masih ran and hid inside his residence. The FIR goes on to say that Muhammad Akram called the police on 15 to report the alleged offence.

Jahangir claims that he, Gondal and Akram presented the burnt pages to the police officials who arrived at the scene in response to the call as ‘evidence’.

The second FIR<sup>8</sup> was lodged several hours after the lynching incident, on charges of attempted murder (Sec. 324 of the PPC) and other offences committed by the mob, including charges under Sec. 186, 353, 436, 440 and 149 of the PPC and S. 7 and 11 of the Anti-Terrorism Act 1957. Since Nazir Masih’s death on the night between 2 and 3 June, the charge of murder has also been added to the report. The mission noted, however, that the original FIR made no

mention of the announcement issued from the mosque loudspeaker under the relevant provisions of the Punjab Loudspeakers Act 2015, despite this having played a direct role in rallying the mob.

## NCJP Proactive Collaboration for Masih family

NCJP maintains close communication with the Masih family, offering support throughout. Recognizing the need for the family's protection, NCJP's national delegation liaised with the Meesaq Centre Lahore to implement necessary measures for the safety of the family.



Through our healthy networking with Meesaq Centre officials, we were facilitated



<sup>7</sup>[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QQyuD7zUd9qQkNnDhwyzu4jlat6rF6nB/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QQyuD7zUd9qQkNnDhwyzu4jlat6rF6nB/view?usp=drive_link)

<sup>8</sup>[https://drive.google.com/file/d/19kHAMVDxuzhQ0HpLHUI\\_fpxp-qPzUkIP/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/19kHAMVDxuzhQ0HpLHUI_fpxp-qPzUkIP/view?usp=drive_link)

in arranging a meeting with Mr. Raza (SP, Lahore, and Mr. Rizwan (ASP, Sargodha) who recommended a meeting with Dr. Asad Ejaz (DPO, Sargodha), ensuring comprehensive support and collaboration in addressing the situation.



### **Christian Leaders Call for Justice and Protection**

**Islamabad:** On June 4, 2024, under the leadership of Archbishop Dr. Joseph Arshad, organized a peaceful protest with Christian leaders outside the Press Club in Islamabad. They condemned the Sargodha incident and the brutal murder of Nazir Masih.



Senator Tahir Khalil Sindhu, co-chairperson, HRCP Ms Munizae Jahangir, former senator Farhatullah Babar, representatives of the Civil Society, journalists, religious

leadership of the mainstream churches and representatives of the Christian community participated and demanded justice for the victim family in Sargodha and prevention of such brutal events in the future.

**Gujranwala:** On June 4, 2024, NCJP Gujranwala office, under the supervision of National Director Rev. Fr. Bernard Emmanuel from the Diocesan office Gujranwala, along with its local peace committee, organized a peaceful protest in St. Mark's parish Gujranwala. The protest was in response to the tragic incident in Sargodha and was led by the parish priest Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Ahmed, Rev. Fr. Darak Lal, and the peace committee members.



### **Funeral of Nazir Masih**

In response to the incident, local authorities have taken steps to ensure the security of Christian communities, including the deployment of additional police forces to protect churches.

NCJP has strongly condemned Masih's death, calling for prompt justice and improved protection for minority groups, and has stood in solidarity with the grieving family,

offering support and condolences during this difficult time.



Recently, members of the organization attended the funeral of Nazir Masih, who battled until the end. The funeral, held on June 3, 2024, drew a substantial crowd, reflecting the community's profound respect and mourning for the departed.

## Press Statements by PCBC

**Dated: June 04, 2024:** *The Pakistan Catholic Bishops Conference (PCBC) strongly condemns the murder of Nazir Masih*<sup>9</sup>

*A strong condemnation is issued by the Pakistan Catholic Bishops Conference following the murder of Nazir Masih in Sargodha. It is a stark reminder of the ongoing struggles faced by religious minorities in Pakistan. Nazir Masih, a Christian, succumbed to severe head injuries after enduring mob violence—a tragic event that underscores the persistent misuse of blasphemy laws in the country. Despite undergoing two surgeries and receiving extensive medical care over nine days at the Combined Military Hospital in Rawalpindi, Masih's injuries proved fatal.*

*In his statement, His Grace Bishop Samson Shukardin, the President of the Pakistan*

*Catholic Bishops Conference, mourned the loss of a community member and criticized the broader systemic issues that allow such tragedies to recur. Bishop Shukardin pointed out that this incident is not an isolated one; rather, it follows a troubling pattern that has persisted since at least 1992, following the murder of another Christian teacher, Namet Ahmer, in Faisalabad. He emphasized that the real issue extends beyond the immediate perpetrators of violence to include successive governments that have failed to address or reform the laws that enable such abuses.*

*His Excellency urged the government and law enforcement agencies to implement and enforce measures that genuinely protect religious minorities and ensure that justice is served for Nazir Masih and others who have suffered similar fates. Additionally, he reached out to the Christian community, asking them to pray for the aggrieved family*

*Pakistan Catholic Bishops Conference*

## Conclusion

The Sargodha incident is a stark reminder of the challenges faced by religious minorities in Pakistan. The NCJP remains committed to ensuring justice and peace, urging both local and international communities to support their efforts in protecting vulnerable populations

## Recommendations

Based on the fact-finding, NCJP puts forward the following recommendations aimed at preventing such incidents, improving law enforcement protocols, and fostering interfaith dialogue:

<sup>9</sup> <https://thewhiteposts.com/pakistani-catholic-bishops-condemn-murder-of-nazir-masih/>

1. **Swift and Impartial Justice:** Ensure that the victims receive justice without delay.
2. **Judicial Inquiry:** Conduct an inquiry led by Dr. Shoaib Suddle to establish accountability.
3. **Security Measures:** The primary function is to implement protection and security for Nazir Masih's family.
4. **Police Accountability:** Hold police officials responsible for any inaction.
5. **Protection from False Charges:** Prevent the registration of false blasphemy charges against Christians.
6. **Compensation and Financial Assistance:** Provide prompt compensation for the damaged property and stolen accessories.
7. **Legal Support:** NCJP aims to provide legal assistance to Masih's family, including legal counselling and representation of their rights.
8. **Paralegal Support & Trauma Counseling:** Offer emotional and psychological support to the family who is in trauma after the brutal incident.
9. **Rehabilitation and relocation** of the family for their protection.

According to the NCJP's finding and reported by the family,

- houses were destroyed,
- precious household items and accessories were stolen
- bike (Honda 125) was destroyed
- damaged and stolen stock in the caused approx. 30-40 million loss



### **Demands**

Through the platform NCJP, all Commissions working under the Pakistan Catholic Bishop's Conference (PCBC) demand:

- Swift and impartial justice for the victims.
- Judicial inquiry led by Dr. Shoaib Suddle.
- Accountability for police inaction.
- No false blasphemy charges against Christians.
- Prompt compensation for the damaged property.