



PRAY FOR PERSECUTED BROTHERS & SISTERS

Pray for the Persecuted in Pakistan

Remember the prisoners as if chained with them - those who are mistreated - since you yourselves are in the Body also.

(Hebrews 13:3)

Two Christian Women Killed for Refusing to Convert to Islam



The bodies of Christian women Sajida Mushtaq (28) and her sister Abida Qaiser (26), who had gone missing on 26 November, were found on 4 January by police in Lahore.

The bodies of Sajida and Abida were found bound and bundled into sacks in an area drainage ditch.

Sajida's husband Mushtaq Masih told Morning Star News: "My wife often complained of harassment by her supervisors [at a local pharmaceutical factory] but she used to tell me that she was handling the situation well. After she went missing, one of my relatives shared with us that. Sajida had confided in her that her supervisors, Muhammad Mumtaz and Naeem Butt, used to pressure her and Abida to convert to Islam and marry them.

"I have three sons and a daughter - the eldest 11 years old, and the youngest 5 - while Abida has only one daughter, aged 9. You can imagine the emotional and mental trauma our children and all other family members have been suffering since Sajida and Abida went missing. When police informed us that they had identified the two bodies as those of our loved ones, it seemed that our entire world had come crumbling down."

Mushtaq Masih told Asia News: "This murder took place because we are poor Christian workers. We want these monsters [the two kidnappers] to be put in prison, according to the law. So others will be able to learn how women must be treated and respected, even if they are poor or belonging to a minority."

Police Investigation

The police officer investigating the case, Iftikhar Hussain, said that officers took Mumtaz and Butt into custody after relatives of the sisters informed them that Mumtaz used to pressurise the two women to marry him and that the two suspects had confessed to killing them.

"During interrogation, Naeem confessed that they had abducted the sisters, and after keeping them hostage for a few days for satisfying their lust, had slit their throats and thrown their bodies into the drain," Hussain said. Both suspects were granted bail and Naeem Butt is reported to have disappeared along with his family.

Background

Local pastor Amir Salamat Maish said that most of the population of Makhlan Colony, where Sajida and Abida lived, are poor and illiterate Christians who do not have many options but to work as packers, cleaners, sweepers and sanitary workers in local factories that manufacture clothes, shoes, medicine and gloves. These factories are situated near the drain where Sajida and Abida's bodies were found.

Christian workers are mistreated, face hatred and are considered inferior to Muslims, while Christian girls are asked to convert to Islam and marry Muslim men. The case of Sajida and Abida is not an isolated one but is common in most workplaces.

Reaction

Punjab Province Minister for Minorities and Human Rights Ejaz Alam Augustine condemned the murder of the two Christian women, saying: "No words are enough to condemn the barbarity meted out to the two innocent women." He said the increasing number of forced conversions of Christian women and girls in Punjab is a dangerous trend and that the government is forming legislation to criminalise the practice. However, he added that consensus on the legislation is necessary to ensure its unanimous approval in the Punjab Assembly, or else it would fail.

Nasir Saeed, Director of CLAAS-UK, said that he does not have much hope that the family will ever get justice, as getting justice in Pakistan is a very expensive and lengthy process and the poor cannot afford it. It is even harder when the perpetrator is Muslim and the victim is Christian. He added: "The killing of Abida and Sajida in such a merciless way is not an isolated case, but the killing, rape and forced conversion of Christian girls have become an everyday matter. Unfortunately, nobody pays any attention - even the national media - as Christians are considered inferior and their lives worthless."

(Asia News, CLAAS-UK, Morning Star News)

