



Hindu American Foundation Human Rights Factsheet

Notan Lal: Pakistani Prisoner of Conscience

Notan Lal is a Hindu school principal from Ghotki, Sindh in Pakistan. After a student claimed that he committed blasphemy against the prophet Muhammad, the student's father filed a false case against Notan Lal who was then detained on September 15, 2019. He was convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to life in prison on February 7, 2022.

Overview

Notan Lal, a Hindu school principal, was accused of blasphemy in a First Information Report on September 14, 2019. The 59 year old was detained the following day, after which further anti-Hindu violence erupted in Ghotki. The student who claimed that Lal had made blasphemous comments later stated on social media that he had made the false statements out of anger after being chastised by the principal regarding his schoolwork.

The accuser Abdul Aziz Khan Rajput claimed that his son studying in 11th grade told him that the owner of the school, Notan Lal, came in during a class and spoke negatively about the Prophet Muhammad. After an initial investigation the case was sent to the Anti-Terrorism Court-II, Sukkur.

Notan Lal was convicted on February 7, 2022 under a blasphemy law, Section 295(c) PPC, and sentenced to suffer rigorous imprisonment for life and to pay a Rs. 50,000 fine or endure "Simple Imprisonment" for four additional months. He has been remanded back to Central Prison, Sukkur.

Notan Lal leaves behind a wife and four children ages nine-22 years old.

Between 1987-2021, 1,865 individuals were charged under blasphemy laws in Pakistan while at least 128 individuals were killed by extrajudicial mob justice for blasphemy. Three weeks ago, Christian Pastor Zafar Bhatti had his life sentence for blasphemy increased to the death penalty for allegedly sending text messages insulting the Prophet Muhammad's mother, despite the phone not being registered in his name.

Recommendation:

The United States must urge Pakistan to release Notan Lal, a man who was falsely accused and convicted of blasphemy.