

November 14, 2024

My name is Gulzar Masih. I was born into a Christian family and am the eldest among my four brothers and two sisters.

Below are the details of my family members:

- 1- Gulzar Masih - January 1, 1975 (Self)
- 2- Uzma Bibi - January 14, 1984 (Wife)
- 3- Fizza Gulzar - December 17, 2007 (Daughter)

April 1986: I completed my primary school education at Saint Joseph School, Faisalabad.

May 1986: I joined a friend's second-hand garment shop. My friend used to purchase containers from foreign countries, which we would sell in the shop.

September 1992: To financially support my family, I started a small scrap business with a childhood Muslim friend, Muhammad Yaseen, son of my father's friend Muhammad Gulab. We used to buy items like used plastic, iron, and copper and sell them to various recycling companies. Over time, I earned enough from the business to build my own house and support my younger siblings' education.

October 12, 2001: With my parents' consent, I married Uzma Nayamat, a Christian girl from Faisalabad.

June 17, 2006: My father passed away due to a heart attack.

February 14, 2007: Near my parents' house in Faisalabad, I purchased a piece of land on an installment plan. While the city was celebrating Valentine's Day, I moved into my newly constructed house with my wife and Fizza after completing the construction.

December 17, 2007: On this day, our daughter Fizza was born. My mother informed me that my sister Sajida's marriage had been fixed for the next month. My mother wished that after Sajida's marriage, I, along with my wife and daughter, would move back to our parents' house.

January 7, 2008: Today, at our parents' house, my sister Sajida married Naseer Masih, a resident of Christian Colony, Gojra. After her marriage, Sajida moved to her in-laws' house.

A few days after Sajida's wedding celebrations, my wife and I decided to rent out our house to suitable tenants. Shortly after, we moved back to our parents' house.

August 1, 2009: On the accusation of blasphemy, seven members of a Christian family were burned alive, and 60 houses in the same Christian Colony were set on fire and destroyed. Later, with the efforts of the Prime Minister and the Federal Ministry for Minorities' director, Shahbaz Bhatti, the 60 houses were reconstructed, and the families were resettled. Among these houses was the home of my sister Sajida's in-laws.

December 21, 2011: Today, the Muslims of Gojra falsely accused Naseer's cousin, Roma Ilyas, of blasphemy, and an FIR was registered against Roma. After the FIR, the police came to Roma's house for investigation but instead of investigating, they threatened and intimidated her.

Roma's mother, fearing the accusation and the police, sent Roma to her brother's house in Lahore on the same day. The police continued to visit Roma's family, asking about Roma. Roma's mother would always tell them that she didn't know where Roma had gone.

After several months, when the police started stopping Roma's brothers and questioning them about her, Roma's family realized that they could not stay silent anymore. The accusation against Roma could bring severe consequences for her family.

Therefore, Roma's family decided that they could no longer stay in their home. After hiding in Lahore for some time, in 2013, Roma, along with her sister Pinky and two brothers, Chand and Qaiser, left Pakistan and went to Bangkok in search of international protection.

December 9, 2014: It was 2 AM when there was a knock on our door. I opened the door and saw that Roma's mother, along with her younger sister Naila and brother Waqar, had arrived with Sajida and Naseer. After welcoming them into our home, I asked Sajida why they had come. Sajida explained that Roma had gone to Thailand, but the police were still looking for Roma's mother and her children because of Roma.

It had been three years, and Roma's mother, with her two children, had been hiding, sometimes in Lahore, sometimes in Karachi, and sometimes in Abbottabad. At Sajida's request, I allowed Roma's mother and her children to stay with us.

January 1, 2015: For the New Year celebration, my friend's father Muhammad Gulab came to our house with some fruit and sweets. I asked Uzma to make tea for Uncle. While we were discussing our business, Roma's mother came into the sitting area. Uncle first wished her but soon recognized her as the woman he had seen on a news channel, whose daughter Roma Ilyas was involved in a blasphemy case.

Realizing this, Uncle stood up and said to me, "This is Roma's mother, right? What is she doing here? How long have you been hiding her?"

I tried to explain to Uncle, but whenever I spoke, he became angrier and shouted at me. Uncle kept saying, "This woman is the mother of a blasphemer. She deserves to be punished by death."

In the meantime, Uncle called the police and informed them that Roma's mother was staying at our house.

I went to the kitchen under the pretext of getting tea and told Roma's mother to take her children and leave through the back door because the police were about to arrive. I asked Uncle to wait until the police arrived. By the time the police came, Roma's mother and her children had already left. I didn't know that while I was in the kitchen, Uncle had also called the Imam of the nearby Jamaat-e-Islami mosque, Haji Zafar, and informed him about Roma's mother's presence at our house.

After 15-20 minutes, the police, along with some people from the mosque, arrived at our house. There were 12-14 people in total, and as soon as they entered, they started threatening, beating, and torturing everyone in the house. Uzma fainted from the ordeal. Seeing her condition, the police stopped the people from the mosque, but they refused to leave. Uncle tried to get them to leave with the police's help because they were badly beating me, my sister Sajida, and Naseer.

Before leaving, the police told us, “You’ve sheltered the family of a blasphemer, so by evening, help us capture Roma’s mother. Otherwise, we will not be able to protect you from the wrath of the Muslims.”

That same day, I turned off my phone and Uzma’s phone. In the evening, I packed some clothes, important documents, cash, and jewelry, and left for my friend Jamil’s house in Sargodha. However, Sajida and Naseer along with my mother also left for Fiaz’s house in Lahore.

January 5, 2015: This morning, I kept my phone on to contact my relatives. Around 11 AM, I received a call from Uncle Gulab, and I answered it. At first, Uncle expressed regret for calling the police and Haji Zafar, but then he started asking how I knew Roma’s family and why I had supported them in hiding.

Uncle said, “I won’t ask you whether you know Roma’s guilt or not because Roma has escaped Pakistan. Just tell me, when did Roma’s mother, brother, and sister arrive at your place? And where are they now?”

On one hand, I felt guilty for being accused of my friend’s father, and on the other, I told him, “If Roma is guilty, then why are you after her mother, brother, and sister?”

Hearing this, Uncle shouted angrily into the phone, as if I was never his friend. He said, “Look, you infidel... You are kafir! You people are non-Muslims, yet we let you live in our country. Do you know that Jamaat-e-Islami has a network all over Pakistan? I will reach you in no time. Now tell me, where are Roma’s mother, brother, and sister?”

Hearing Uncle speak like this for the first time, from my childhood until now, I was terrified. His anger made my throat dry. Without saying anything, I immediately disconnected the call and turned off my phone.

After this call, my wife and I decided that we would sell our house and go to Thailand or Malaysia to seek international protection.

January 7, 2015: I had no idea that, in his anger, Uncle had already done many things against me in my absence.

At 8 PM, I switched on my phone to call a Christian property dealer friend, Aatif. When I checked my phone, I saw that I had missed calls from over 100 unknown numbers. Suddenly, my phone vibrated again with a new call. I answered, and a deep voice said, “This is Haji Zafar from Faisalabad. Are you Gulzar?” I replied, “Yes, go ahead.” Haji said, “You scoundrel... kafir! We will find you, your wife, and your daughter and set you all on fire in the middle of the street. The punishment for blasphemy is death. Count your days!” I quickly disconnected the call, copied Aatif’s number, and turned off my phone, never to turn it on again.

January 8, 2015: When I told Jamil about the call from Haji Zafar the previous evening, he too was terrified. He immediately destroyed my phone and SIM card and then asked me to pack our clothes.

That same afternoon, Jamil took us from his house to his cow farmhouse, which was about a 40-minute drive away. Jamil used to visit the farmhouse daily to take care of his animals and sell milk.

May 23, 2015: Today, Jamil told me that Jamaat-e-Islami members in Sargodha were circulating my photo, and now it was no longer safe for me to stay here.

May 25, 2015: We arrived in Lahore at Uzma's aunt's house.

September 21, 2015: My property dealer friend, Aatif, had sold our house for 3 million rupees, and we had received the payment by now.

October 5, 2015: With the help of Uzma's cousin, who is a travel agent, we submitted our passports to travel to Thailand.

December 7, 2015: I flew to Bangkok, Thailand with my family.