

**April 25, 2025**

### **Statement of Jahanzaib ISHAQ Family**

My name is Jahanzaib Ishaq, and I was born in a Christian family in the city of Faisalabad, Pakistan.

The following are the details of my family members:

1. Jahanzaib Ishaq – Father – 28-10-1986
2. Humaira Latif – Mother – 09-09-1992
3. Justin King – Son – 17-05-2014
4. Johanna Rose – Daughter – 28-12-2017

**April 2005:** I completed my high school education in science from Sada-e-Pakistan, Faisalabad.

**May 2005:** Right after finishing high school exams, I joined Khayyam Restaurant as an Order Taker, where I worked until June 2007.

**April 2007:** While working at Khayyam, I enrolled in a 1-year Hotel Management Diploma at the Skill Development Council in Faisalabad, which I completed by May 2008.

**June 2008:** I started freelancing and joined a famous catering company in my area, Rajput Caterers, where I handled stock management, wedding stage designing, and food services management.

**November 2010:** Alongside freelance event management projects, I also joined the management of the Banquet Hall at Royalton Hotel, Faisalabad, where I worked as a supervisor assistant for 20 months. Eventually, I continued with freelance event management as it was in demand.

**April 11, 2013:** My mother arranged my marriage to Humaira Latif, a Christian girl from Faisalabad who worked as a beautician.

A few weeks after our wedding, my late stepbrother, Babar Ishaq, who lived in Al-Noor Town, Lahore, called me and informed me that 20 new banquet halls had been built at his neighboring workplace, Garrison Golf and Country Club, Lahore, and they were hiring new staff for banquet hall management. That same day, I forwarded my resume to Babar to apply for the job.

Within a couple of weeks of submitting my resume, I received a job offer letter from Garrison Golf and Country Club. After that, my wife, my mother, my sister, and I decided to move to Lahore to stay with Babar.

Babar lived with his wife (Rubina) and four school-going children (aged 5-13) in a rented house. The lower portion of the house was occupied by Babar and his family, while the upper portion was occupied by the Muslim landlord and his family.

Initially, we moved from Faisalabad to Babar's place to start anew in a new city, with plans to eventually move into an independent residence.

**June 2, 2013:** Today was my first day as a management supervisor at the Defence Orchid Banquet Hall in Garrison Golf and Country Club. I was hired at a monthly salary of 40,000 rupees, plus 8,000 rupees for medical and transportation allowances.

**November 2, 2013:** We had been living with Babar for over five months. As usual, Babar and I left home at 9:15 AM on his bike for work.

At 4:55 PM, Rubina called Babar and urgently asked him to come home, saying that Soham had caused a big problem at the children's tuition. Babar and I immediately left for home. On the way, I asked Babar what had happened, and he told me that Rubina had only said that Soham had torn pages of the Quran during tuition, which had caused a lot of trouble.

Before continuing my story, I want to give a quick overview of Soham, Babar's other three children, and the family conducting the tuition. Due to Soham's (6) sensory impairment disability, Babar had not yet admitted him to any school. His two elder daughters, Simran (13) and Marish (11), were students at St. Francis High School, and Vishal (9) studied at Little Angel School. All four attended evening home tuition from 4-6 PM at the house of two Sunni Muslim sisters, Ayesha and Rabia, who were also Vishal's school teachers. Additionally, Ayesha and Rabia's father would pick up Simran, Marish, and three other girls from the area in his rickshaw for school drop-off and pickup.

By 5:30 PM, as we entered our street, we could see a crowd gathered outside our house from a distance. Half of them were our neighbors, while the other half were people from the neighboring Sunni Tehreek mosque, Jamia Masjid Anwar-e-Madina. As we entered the crowd, 4-6 people grabbed me off the bike, threw me to the ground, and started beating me without asking any questions. Similarly, 4-6 others were brutally beating Babar, some with wooden rods. The assault continued for at least 2-3 minutes until some of our Muslim neighbors intervened and rescued us. That was when Babar and I abandoned the bike and ran into the house.

By the time we entered the house, we were so badly beaten that we collapsed on the porch. Humaira and Rubina were watching through a hole in the door as the Sunni Tehreek people, who had come from the mosque, set our bike on fire using its own petrol. Somehow, Humaira and Rubina managed to lift us from the porch and sit us on the sofa in the drawing room, where they explained the whole situation.

Rubina told Babar, "You know Soham doesn't understand what he does. During tuition today, Soham picked up the Quran, thinking it was just a common book, and started playing with it. His teacher and Simran saw him tearing two pages from it." Rubina added that Simran said as soon as Ayesha saw this, she picked up the two pages from the ground, took the Quran from Soham, kissed it, and placed it on the nearby table. Then she started slapping Soham repeatedly, and Simran said the teacher wouldn't stop, leaving Soham crying uncontrollably. Rubina said she had grabbed Soham and apologized to the teacher, saying, "Soham doesn't know this is the Quran."

Meanwhile, Rabia and her mother had entered the room upon hearing Ayesha's shouting and Soham's screams. Simran said that when she tried to hold Soham, both teachers and their mother started beating her too. Eventually, they pushed all of them out of the house with slaps and shoves.

Rubina said that when she and Humaira were returning from the market with groceries at 4:45 PM, they hadn't seen the Sunni Tehreek people from the mosque outside the house. Instead, they saw a crowd of the teachers, their mother, their two brothers, and neighbors gathered outside. I noticed marks on Humaira's face and asked her who had done this. She told me that the teachers, their mother, and their brothers had also harassed and beaten her and Rubina badly. They had barely managed to escape and enter the house.

After hearing all this, Babar and I told Humaira and Rubina to pack all the necessary belongings because we could no longer stay here. Rubina called her brother, Nadeem, who lived in Mian Meer Colony, about a 40-minute drive away, and after explaining the situation, he agreed to let us stay with him.

For the next two hours, Simran and Rubina kept checking through the door's hole and reported that the teachers' brothers and about 20 Sunni Tehreek people were waiting outside. We couldn't call the police, nor could we escape safely.

All we could do was wait for them to leave, which we did until 8:30 PM. As soon as Rubina saw through the door that the Sunni Tehreek people were gone, we took our bags, left through the back door, walked for 5-7 minutes to the main road, and booked two rickshaws to Mian Meer Colony.

**November 4, 2013:** All ten of us were hiding at Nadeem's place when, around 11 AM, Babar's Muslim friend Saleem, who ran a general store near our house, called Babar. He warned us not to return, as a mob of 40-50 people from Jamia Masjid Anwar-e-Madina had gathered at our house. Saleem said that since the house was locked and the landlord was present, they couldn't damage the property, but they were showing copies of Babar's and my IDs to passersby, asking if anyone had seen us.

After this call, we packed our bags and went to Pastor Sushil's place at FGA Church LD Quarter, as Rubina had often booked rides for Mian Meer Colony with the teachers' father's rickshaw.

Exactly one hour after arriving at Pastor Sushil's place, at 2:30 PM, Nadeem called Babar and told him not to come back, as six people looking for us had just left his place. They claimed to be from the Sunni Tehreek's Jamia Masjid in Al-Noor Town. Nadeem said they had only left after he let them search his house, and they warned him to call them if he learned of our whereabouts.

We had already explained our entire situation to Pastor Sushil. He told us that he had once visited Thailand, where he met two Christian families who, like us, had faced persecution due to their religion. The pastor mentioned he had a travel agent friend who had helped him during his visit.

After everything that had happened, we had already decided that we could no longer stay in Pakistan.

**November 15, 2013:** Today, we submitted our passports for Thai tourist visas through the Pastor's travel agent friend.

**December 4, 2013:** Today, the travel agent handed us our passports stamped with Thai tourist visas.

**December 17, 2013:** Finally, all ten of us left Pakistan from Allama Iqbal Airport, Lahore.

## **My Family's Struggle for Survival and Freedom in Bangkok, Thailand:**

**December 19, 2013:** With only \$3,000 to our name and through a contact provided by Pastor Sushil—a fellow Christian refugee named Nadeem, who had been living in Bangkok with his family for 18 months—we managed to secure a one-room apartment in the Charan Sanitwong area. After a single night in a hotel, all ten of us—our entire family—crowded into that small, unfamiliar space. It wasn't much, but in that moment, it was everything we had.

After paying a \$300 advance, we moved into what was likely a 12x20 meter room — the space that would be our home for the next 12 months. Within just the first week, we had already spent \$1,000 trying to meet the basic needs of a 10-person family with a child. Mattresses, pillows, bed sheets, a stove, a gas cylinder, and a few kitchen essentials — even the bare minimum added up quickly.

**February 14, 2014:** Our tourist visas expired, turning us into illegal immigrants. Fear of the police kept us trapped inside our room, terrified to step outside. The money we had brought from Pakistan ran out more than ten days ago. Every morning, we traveled 40 minutes on free buses to the Sikh Temple in Asoke, where we ate whatever food was offered and carried back scraps for later. Other Christian Pakistani families in our apartment told us about churches and UN-affiliated organizations that provided ration and rent support—our lifelines.

**May 17, 2014:** Justin was born via normal cesarean delivery, thanks to financial help from the Bangkok Refugee Center (BRC). But we had no money for milk or diapers. When he was just two weeks old, a Thai family from Christ Church stepped in, providing milk and diapers for him until he turned two—a mercy we could never repay.

**December 2014:** A massive immigration crackdown forced us to flee Charan Sanitwong. We moved to a one-room apartment on Street 75 in Prachauthit, squeezing into two rented rooms, clinging to the hope of safety.

**September 9, 2015:** While my sister, mother, Babar, and I were out buying groceries, the rest of our family—including the children—were arrested in another crackdown. That evening, by the grace of God and UNHCR's intervention, mothers with toddlers and disabled children were released. Humaira and Justin, Rubina and her four children—they were spared. But the terror of that day never left us.

**April 3, 2017:** Eleven months ago today, the UNHCR delivered its verdict on our refugee status determination interview. They had rejected our family's case, shutting yet another door on our hopes for safety.

**December 28, 2017:** Today, our daughter Johanna was born. But just like with Justin, we had no money for milk or diapers to care for her. That's why we don't even think about having more children anymore—we feel our family is now complete with these two little ones.

**March 11, 2021:** We believe it was because of the phone call about the UNHCR's decision on our reopened appeal, just six days earlier, that we lost Babar today to a heart attack.

Before I tell you what exactly happened to Babar today, I want to explain how we were living. Like other illegal refugees, Babar and I would find occasional construction work—6 or 7 days a month—earning barely 500 to 700 baht per day. That meager income was just enough to pay our rent, while even now, we still depend on churches for food and secondhand clothes for the children.

For the past few weeks, Babar hadn't been able to find any work. But today, as he climbed a folding staircase at a construction site to paint, he suddenly suffered a heart attack. He fell backward, and his head struck the corner of a wooden table. Just like that, he was gone.

**November 11, 2021:** Nine days after our Canadian sponsorship interview, the rejection letter came. Another door slammed shut.

We have faced severe hardships—fleeing persecution, living in a single room with ten people, and struggling to meet basic needs. Yet our faith in Christ remains strong. We humbly ask the Church to support us in resettling to a place where we can live safely and worship freely. Your prayers and help can give our family a new start and renewed hope.