

January 27, 2025

My name is Azhar Qayum son of Yaqoob Masih. I was born in a Catholic family in Lahore, Pakistan. I am the second oldest brother of my six siblings.

Following are the details of my family:

- 1- Azhar Qayum – December 24, 1972 (Father)
- 2- Shaheen Azhar – March 22, 1971 (Mother)
- 3- Sameer Azhar – January 31, 2001 (Son)
- 4- Muneeb Azhar – August 3, 2001 (Son)

April 1991: I completed my senior high school at Saint Anthony, Shahdara Town, Lahore.

October 1994: I took my final examinations for a BA (Bachelor of Arts) at the Government Shahdara Degree College, Lahore.

July 1995: I completed my six-month Basic IT (Information Technology) certification at IBMCC, Lahore.

May 5, 1996: Today, my mother has passed away due to a heart stroke. However, my father passed away due to a heart stroke as well on July 9, 2001.

June 1996: With the support of our parish priest Joseph Louis, I got a job as a computer operator in 21st Century Services Pvt. Ltd. Company in Lahore.

July 1999: I got a job in the police force as a computer operator (office clerk) in the IG Office (Inspector General of Police Office) in 1999.

February 13, 2000: I married Shaheen, a Christian-born daughter of Bashir John and a resident of Lahore.

March 2001: Although we were registered members of Saint John Church since I was born, today I joined the Church Welfare Society as a volunteer, which works to improve the condition of Pakistan's Christian community.

March 5, 2013: A former neighbor and relative, Sadiq Masih with his family, relocated to his new home in Joseph Colony from Shahdara Town in Lahore. He invited me, my sister Riffat Maryum, and two other neighbors, informing us that Pastor Azam Masih would be speaking at the Thanksgiving service at his home on March 8.

March 7, 2013: Sawan Masih, a resident of Joseph Colony, Lahore, had his Muslim friend Shahid Imran accuse him of insulting the Prophet Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him) during their conversation today.

I have known Sawan since I was a member of the Saint John Welfare Society. Throughout our visits, Riffat and I were on the welfare crew where we met Sawan and his family several times. Sawan grew up in poverty and supported his family by working as a sanitation worker. His father was old, in his late 60s, yet he was pleasant and humble. Sobia Masih, Sawan's wife, was a housewife, and they are the parents of three children: a son and two daughters.

March 8, 2013: In the middle of the prayer meeting, we suddenly heard that the people were shouting and crying for aid. We had to rush out to investigate the noises. When I got out of the house with others,

we observed Muslim rioters vandalizing and burning homes. Many people were fleeing for their safety, however the others, who were with me, also fled for their families' protection.

I noticed three police officers standing in the distance and approached them to inquire about what was happening. When I approached them, I noticed Superintendent of Police, Umer Virk, among them. I knew Umer Virk because he used to visit the IG Office (Inspector General of Police) at my office. Then I discovered that Umer Virk spoke with someone on a wireless set. I heard that someone on the wireless told him not to do anything to stop what was happening in Joseph's colony.

Following the orders, Umer Virk told his team that nothing would be stopped because CM had given the orders. I was standing right next to him, after hearing this, I was completely shocked; no one was attempting to defend the lives of innocent people, even though police were present at the site.

I started making appeals to please stop them, telling the police team that I was also a police officer. But the SHO (Station House Officer) yelled at me that Mother Fu**** ...! Get your as* fuc* out of this...! He said, "Didn't you hear what was just ordered?".

I learned that the main reason why the colony was attacked and vandalized was because Sawan, was falsely accused of blasphemy. Sawan allegedly told his friend, "My Jesus is genuine; he is a son of God." He'll return. My Jesus is true and will give you salvation. Whereas, Shahid unjustly accused Sawan. Shahid alleged that Sawan blasphemed against the Prophet Mohammed.

When the news reporters and other Christian leaders arrived - they demanded security for the citizens and their homes. The SHO firmly refused, saying, "The matter is out of our hands; we can do nothing." Once the Islamic Organizations issue a call to protest, it is impossible to stop them; you should advise your people to stay away from their houses and not return."

Later, more police arrived on the scene and prevented additional harm. The police were able to calm the mob by filing FIR 112/13 against Sawan under Section 295-C of the PPC (death sentence) at Badami Bagh Police Station, assuring them that the accused would be handed over to the mob. This incident began at roughly 1 p.m. today and ended late at night.

March 10, 2013: Following discussions with the Christian community, our welfare decided to give Sawan to the police to protect the people's lives.

The police informed us that Sawan would be secure in police custody and released after the atmosphere calmed down, but instead charged him with the death penalty and blasphemy.

March 20, 2013: Riffat, and I presented a plea against the bogus accusations to the Additional Session Judge in Lahore, assisted by a Christian lawyer, Robinson.

Our welfare was helping the victims of this disaster by offering clothing, food, financial aid to the community, and shelter for those who had lost their homes.

March 26, 2013: Riffat called me today at 2 p.m. and told me she had accepted Islam. I couldn't believe it and questioned her, "What are you saying?" Riffat stated that she had withdrawn her name from the case, and I should do the same. I asked, "Are you crazy?" Riffat suddenly began crying on the phone, telling me that she had a near-death experience barely an hour before phoning me. She said that a group of Islamist extremists from Lashkar-e-Jhangvi had gone to her home and may have killed her and her

family. If she hadn't called the lawyer to say that she wanted to withdraw her name from the case. After all of this, they put guns to our heads and forced us to recite the Islamic Kalama.

March 27, 2013: At 7 p.m., around 12 armed Lashkar-e-Jhangvi members arrived at our house from the Jamia Masjid Ghodey Shah in the neighborhood. When I opened the door after they knocked, they all came inside. Two of them seized me with both hands, placed their hands against my shoulders, and bent my head to the ground. A man held a revolver in one hand and grabbed my hair with the other, leaving only his boots visible. He said, "Motherf***er Kafir.." You will sue us in court. Meanwhile, one or two men were striking me from behind, with kicks and iron rods.

On the other side, two of them were assaulting Shaheen, holding her arms from both sides while my two sons went to evening tuition classes. Seeing Shaheen cry, I told them that I was willing to withdraw my name from the case in court; please let my wife go; she has done nothing wrong. After hearing the disturbance, our neighbors entered the house. They began assuring the Islamist extremists on my behalf, requesting that Azhar withdraw his name from the case tomorrow. Please, let them go.

Before leaving, the man who was holding my hair told me, "Tomorrow is Thursday. We will come after Friday prayer and take a copy of the petition from you. Remember, if you don't withdraw your name, we will set fire to your home and your entire family. Shaheen was so afraid that she contacted her brother, Ilyas Ishaq, telling him everything and requested him to take us to his home in Bahar Colony. That night, at about 2 a.m., we went with Ilyas in his Toyota.

May 15, 2013: At 9 a.m., I got a call from an unknown number. The caller was an older man with a thick voice who asked whether he was talking to Azhar. I said, "Yes, I am Azhar." He shouted, "Motherf***er...!" You're still alive because we keep you alive. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi is everywhere in Pakistan, no matter where you hide. Whether Sawan Masih is sentenced in court or not, we shall burn him and you alive." After stating, "Remember what I said," the caller hung up.

Following this call, Shaheen and I decided that we would leave Pakistan. I handed over my family's passports and other essential documentation to Ilyas' travel agent contact so that he could apply for tourist visas to Thailand. Meanwhile, I had previously applied for a tourist visa in the beginning of March to visit Thailand during the yearly government holidays.

June 13, 2013: In the morning, I went to court with the lawyer to ensure that my case for justice for Sawan Masih was heard.

On that same evening, at 7 p.m., Shaheen and I decided to go to our locked house in Shahdara to take our documents and some clothes for our children. Our plan was that we would take our belongings and return to Ilyas's place early in the morning.

But an hour later, we suddenly heard someone shouting in front of our house, saying that the infidels were inside, breaking the door. As soon as we heard, we ran quickly, jumped over the back wall, and entered our neighbor's house. In the meantime, we heard two gunshots at our house's main door, and with those rounds, they burst the latch and entered. When they realized there was no one inside, they fired more gunshots before fleeing. Shaheen and I stayed hidden at our neighbors' house until Ilyas arrived.

After they went, I instructed Shaheen to remain at the neighbors' house until Ilyas or I returned. Then I went to the police station and asked for protection, as well as filing a police report. However, the police refused to assist me, stating that you are not capable of police protection and that you must bear the consequences of your actions. You must face Lashkar-e-Jhangvi on your own; we cannot help you and will not file an appeal for your or your family's protection. A few hours later, at 3 a.m., Ilyas arrived to take us to his home.

June 14, 2013: Ilyas visited my lawyer's office to seek guidance on what we should do next. The lawyer told Ilyas not to contact him again because he did not want to get involved, and asked us to withdraw the plea as well.

June 15, 2013: Finally, Shaheen, I, and our two sons flew to Bangkok from Lahore Airport.