

November 9, 2024

**Office of the UNHCR,
United Nations High Commissioner of Thailand.**

Respected Madam,

My name is Naveed George. I belong to the city of Sheikhpura, Pakistan. I was born into a Christian family and am the fifth child among seven siblings.

Following are the details of my family members:

1. George Naz – June 17, 1950 (Father)
2. Resham Rubina – July 15, 1961 (Mother)
3. Uzma George – August 8, 1984 (Sister)
4. Shazia George – February 20, 1986 (Sister)
5. Farhat George – April 27, 1989 (Sister)
6. Zaheer George – January 5, 1990 (Brother)
7. Naveed George – September 18, 1992 (Self)
8. Ashar George – January 10, 1996 (Brother)
9. Yasir George – January 10, 1996 (Brother)

On **September 5, 2023**, I submitted my application for registration with the UNHCR via email. At the time, I didn't know I needed to provide detailed accounts of the incidents that led me to leave my family and country. Today, with the help of a friend, I am sharing those details.

August 1, 2009: I completed my high school studies at Good Shepherd School, Sheikhpura.

September 2009: I joined a catering service company, *Sunny Catering & Decoration*, in my area. This team provided services for weddings, birthday parties, funerals, and other events. Initially, I was hired as a helper. Within a few months, I learned various chef-cutting styles and how to prepare fast food and Indian and Pakistani cuisines.

June 2, 2010: My father passed away at the age of 60 due to a heart attack. A few days after his death, I joined *AFC (Al-Najam Fried Chicken)* as a chef to support my family. Over four years, I gained experience preparing pizzas, burgers, sandwiches, oven-baked hot wings, steaks, different fried chickens, fried fish, and many rice meals.

December 15, 2014: I enrolled in a six-month advanced food production diploma certification at Gotham College.

July 1, 2015: After completing the course, I did a three-month internship at *Lal Qilla*, Barkat Market, Lahore, and was later appointed as a chef.

October 2016: After saving some money, I returned to Sheikhpura and set up my own food cart, selling fried chicken, french fries, and burgers.

November 20, 2016: I traveled with my paternal aunt to meet her daughter in Karachi. Before visiting my cousin, we stayed at my maternal aunt Monica Almas home. There, I met my 24-year-old cousin, Arifa Anis Ahmed, for the first time. We exchanged phone numbers that day.

December 28, 2016: Arifa and her father, Anis Ahmed (a Muslim man who married my maternal aunt), visited our home in Sheikhpura. They stayed for two days, during which I showed Arifa famous places like Hiran Minar, Jinnah Park, and Company Bagh. We also dined together at good restaurants. We grew close during this time.

When Arifa and her father returned, my mother informed me that they were inquiring about a marriage proposal for Arifa and me. However, my mother refused, stating that she did not want her children to make the same mistake as her sister by marrying into a Muslim family.

Over time, Arifa and I grew more involved with each other, talking on the phone three to four times a day.

April 15, 2017: Arifa and her father visited us in Sheikhpura again for two days. I was busy with my food cart during this visit, but we still managed to talk on the phone while I worked. This time, Arifa's father openly expressed his wish for our marriage. He assured my mother that they would not force me to convert to Islam or Arifa to Christianity, as their primary concern was our mutual understanding. My mother, however, refused again.

May 2, 2017: Despite my mother's refusal, Arifa traveled alone from Karachi to Sheikhpura to see me.

May 3, 2017: We got married in court against my mother's wishes. Initially, I approached several pastors at churches in Sheikhpura to officiate our wedding, but they declined, fearing repercussions due to our minority status.

For the court marriage, I was required to submit a Muslim conversion document. With the lawyer's help, I arranged this document by paying some money.

May 4, 2017: The day after our wedding, Arifa's parents arrived at our house. They didn't know about the marriage initially. However, after my mother informed them, Arifa's father grew extremely angry and involved the local counselor, Muhammad Riaz Dogar, who came with several people to our home.

After learning about our marriage, the counselor calmed Arifa's father and provided a handwritten judgment on a stamped paper, giving one copy each to me and Arifa's father.

May 14, 2017: During a Mother's Day celebration at home, Arifa stopped the music during the Maghrib call to prayer and began shouting angrily.

After this incident, our sexual life became strained. Arifa wouldn't let me touch her unless I performed prayers first.

During Ramadan, Arifa frequently complained about the household's cooking schedule, asking my mother to prepare food earlier so she could eat in her room before breaking her fast.

Over time, she started creating problems at home, insisting that I pray and fast with her. These demands caused tension between us, and one day, we had a heated argument during which I asked her to return to her parents' home.

June 22, 2017: That night, I brought Arifa her favorite chocolate after finishing work at my cart. After dinner and a short walk, we went to bed.

Around 2:00 a.m., two police vans, one from the local police and another from the CIA (Crime Investigation Agency), arrived at our house. Arifa was with them. They broke into our house, and six men, including Arifa's father, entered.

At gunpoint, they forced me to unlock the door. One officer struck me with the butt of his rifle, causing me to fall. They handcuffed me and my brother Zaheer and took us away. Despite Arifa pleading with her father to stop, he slapped her.

On the way to Karachi, the police and Arifa's father stopped multiple times for food, but they didn't give us anything except water. We were also physically abused throughout the journey.

July 1, 2017: After a week of detention, during which we were tortured daily, we were charged under Section 365-A34 (Kidnapping for Extortion) and sent to Karachi Central Jail. Our case was transferred to the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC).

February 28, 2018: After paying a fine of 200,000 PKR each, my brother and I were bailed out. However, we had to remain in Karachi for court hearings. Over the next three years, we appeared in court twice a month.

During this time, our family had to sell three rental houses one by one to cover legal expenses.

November 22, 2018: Late at night, Arifa's brothers, Irfan and Kamran, along with two armed friends, broke into our house. They looted all the cash and jewelry and kidnapped my younger brother, Yasir, at gunpoint. Before leaving, they warned me to confess to kidnapping Arifa at the next court hearing.

Despite filing an FIR and regularly visiting the SHO and DPO offices, the police failed to locate Yasir until they eventually arrested Kamran in Karachi. He revealed Yasir's location, and the police successfully rescued him after 45 days of captivity.

October 19, 2019: Arifa's father also filed a civil court case against us, forcing us to attend both ATC and civil court hearings for 17 months. Eventually, I was acquitted of all charges in the civil court.

April 12, 2021: After four years of struggle, my brother and I were acquitted of all charges in the ATC as well. However, life continued to be difficult.

April 5, 2022: News of my case spread beyond Sheikhpura to nearby villages. It became increasingly difficult for me to step outside as everyone knew I had converted to Islam to marry a Muslim woman. People often questioned why I continued living with my Christian family if I was a Muslim.

One day, I received a phone call from an unknown number. The caller identified himself as Rehmat Ali, a former classmate from Gotham College. He assumed I was Muslim because of my marriage. I reminded him that I was Christian and ended the call.

September 7, 2022: While shopping for groceries at the local market, I encountered Rehmat and two of his friends. They forced me at gunpoint to a nearby mosque, where they taught me how to perform ablution and pray. They instructed me to follow their lead and pray exactly as they did.

Before leaving, they warned me to visit the mosque five times daily for prayers.

Fearing for my safety, my mother contacted my cousin Waseem in Lahore, who offered to keep me at his place until we figured out a solution.

I stayed with Waseem until I could leave the country. With the help of a travel agent friend, Waseem arranged a tourist visa for me to Thailand.

May 26, 2023: I was in Martinpur at my uncle's house when I received my passport with the visa stamp.

June 17, 2023: I finally flew from Lahore to Bangkok, leaving Pakistan behind.