

## **January 3, 2025**

My name is Shahbaz Masih, and I was born into a Christian family in Karachi, Pakistan. I am the fourth among my six siblings.

Following are the details of my family:

- 1- Shahbaz Masih - Father - 07-07-1982
- 2- Asia Shahbaz - Mother - 10-09-1985
- 3- Oliver John - Son - 30-10-2005
- 4- Afeer John - Son - 28-07-2012
- 5- Jennifer Janet - Daughter - 04-10-2015

**August 1993:** My father was a sanitation worker at Karachi Airport in civil aviation. However, he was sent to Karachi's Jinnah Government Hospital for an eye surgery and remained there for a month.

At the time, I was 11 years old, and I used to accompany my mother to the hospital to care for my father. I was in Grade 4 at a private school in Karachi. Yet after my father's eye surgery, I was unable to continue attending school because my elder brother, Aslam Masih, was now only responsible for our family's finances.

**February 1997:** My brother, Aslam, got me a job as a loader at Kolson Chips Manufacturing Company through a friend. My oldest brothers, Aslam and Shahzad, and I began to assist with my sisters' and younger brothers' education as well as the family's financial requirements. I spent the next 18 years with Kolson, first as a loader for 9 years and then as the manager of the transportation loading department for the remaining 9 years.

**October 30, 2004:** My father organized for me to marry Asia Saleem, a Christian girl from a Sindhi Christian family.

I was Catholic, but a few months before the wedding, Ejaz Younas, the pastor of the UPC (United Pentecostal Church) in our neighborhood, came to our house. He invited us to his church and discussed the difference between Catholic and Pentecostal missions in a brief but clear manner. Pastor Ejaz stated that Martin Luther made it clear that the Bible is the sole book from God that contains His revelations to humanity. He additionally pointed out that Catholics believe in both the Bible and sacred scriptures, and that they continue to follow Roman Catholic traditions.

**October 30, 2005:** Today, God gave us our first son, Oliver John. Following Oliver's birth, I was given the opportunity to join the church's worship team. After joining the worship team, I would leave work early on Wednesdays and Saturdays to attend choir rehearsals the day before the church's Thursday and Sunday prayer sessions.

**May 20, 2008:** After hearing Pastor Anwar Waheed's baptism sermon a few weeks ago, Asia and I chose to be connected with Christ via water baptism. The pastor quoted Mark 16:16, stating, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved." On this day, our family was formally registered as Church members in UPC.

**September 9, 2012:** After baptism, in addition to conducting the choir service, I began devoting a lot of time to personal Bible studies. For the past three years, I've coordinated weekly prayer sessions as well

as various church events like Thanksgiving, weddings, and funerals. As a result, the church committee ordained me as a church elder during the Sunday prayer service.

**October 12, 2012:** UPC (United Pentecostal Church) has opened a new church location in Gulshan-e-Memaar. Shamshad Inayat, Bishop of UPC Karachi Parish, selected me as Presider for the Friday prayer gatherings, with Pastor Ejaz serving as church leader.

Muhammed Ramzan, a Muslim shopkeeper from a dairy business near the Gulshan-e-Memaar church, eventually became a friend of mine. Every Friday, I'd buy milk and bread from him for our church. Whenever there were no customers in Ramzan's shop, he frequently asked me about Christianity. I would stay there for 10-15 minutes, addressing his questions. Our connection revolved around discussing the Christian faith.

One Friday, I reminded Ramzan that Jesus declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," whereas Muslims believe their last prophet, Muhammad, seeks Allah's forgiveness for his wrongdoings. I asked Ramzan to figure out who truly holds the key to salvation.

**December 5, 2014:** Today was Ramzan's first time attending the Friday prayer session. The session's topic was "Love of God," which Pastor Ejaz spoke about. Throughout the prayer, he sat silently, listened, and watched everything. In the end, when I approached him and asked if he had any questions about the sermon, he declined. He told me that after hearing the Pastor's interpretation of John 3:16, he understood why Christians refer to Jesus as the Son of God.

Later, when Ramzan was routinely attending church on Fridays, I gave him an Urdu bible.

**May 1, 2015:** Pastor Ejaz was baptizing some church young members at the close of today's Friday meeting, and Ramzan was one of them who accepted the baptism.

**May 8, 2015:** While Pastor Ejaz and I were riding home from the church meeting on a motorcycle in Gulshan-e-Memaar, a group of four Lashkar-e-Jhangvi militants wearing white Shalwar Kameez and sporting beards stopped us on two motorcycles. After stopping us without asking for our names, they addressed me directly and said that they were not going to harm us, but that we should pay close attention to what they were about to say.

One person was armed with a weapon and said, "Do not return here; this is an Islamic country, and Christianity is not permitted to be preached." Another of his companions gave a threat, saying, "If we see you here again, we will not only kill you but also pursue your family.

This incident openly showed that the members of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi were not threatening Pastor Ejaz, but rather targeting me. As a result, the Pastor had clearly instructed me not to preside over the Friday sessions anymore. As a result, I began presiding over Gulshan-e-Memaar's Sunday evening prayer sessions rather than Friday prayers.

**June 7, 2015:** After the Sunday evening prayer service, around 10 p.m., as usual, I was returning with Pastor Ejaz on his motorcycle from Gulshan-e-Memaar to Tesar Town, headed home, when five men from Lashkar-e-Jhangvi on three motorcycles began chasing us from behind and came up alongside our motorbike. They began firing gunshots on the ground, and Pastor Ejaz quickly engaged the brakes and stopped the motorcycle in the middle of the road.

Those four males were on two motorcycles, and the one alone on his motorcycle was the same one that had a pistol the previous time. He pulled up in front of me, chambered his pistol, and fired two bullets into the sky. He stepped forward, grabbed my collar, and pulled me off my bike. Then he struck me in the head with the handle of his gun, knocking me to the ground. That's when they all started tearing into me. One guy even grabbed an iron rod and began striking me, yelling, "I warned you not to come here, didn't I? Do you believe that other Muslims, like Ramzan, have a weak faith and are unable to stop you from converting a Muslim? At the same time, another person said that this is Pakistan, where Islamic Sharia law is in effect, and no infidel can propagate their faith here.

I was terrified and began to repeat sorry, but Pastor Ejaz continued stepping in to help me. The guy with the pistol attempted to stop him twice, but when Pastor stepped in again to save me, he became enraged and shot him in the leg. Pastor Ejaz was now on the ground next to me. The same guy threatened me again, stating that according to Islam, he had warned me twice before, but the third time, he would kill me and my family before leaving.

After regaining my composure, I got Pastor Ejaz onto his motorcycle and drove him to the neighboring Abbasi Shaheed Hospital. I got him admitted and informed his relatives. I informed Asia of the situation and instructed her to pack as I expected to return home by 1 p.m.

The following morning, I took Asia and our two children to my brother Shehzad Mehr's house.

**June 26, 2015:** Bishop Shamshad called me at 4 p.m. today after the afternoon prayer session at the Gulshan-e-Memar church. He informed me that Ramzan had left his family and shop and gone somewhere, and no one knew where he had gone. During the prayer, the guy with a pistol appeared, accompanied by 12 other members who inquired about you. They said that they needed Shahbaz and wanted to know where he lived. They then took a copy of your identity card from the office table drawer. That is why you should not return here.

**June 27, 2015:** Hearing all of this, we were so terrified that today we gave our passports to apply for Thailand tourist visas. I took my family and went to my brother-in-law, Sharfat Salim's place in Hyderabad.

**July 8, 2015:** At Sharafat's address, we received our passports with the tourist visas for Thailand via post.

**July 11, 2015:** Today at 7 p.m., my cousin and friend Humair called to tell me that 20-22 members of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi from our neighborhood mosque were asking about me, my neighbors, and where they could find Shahbaz. He told me that one of the neighbors told them that the house next to your locked house belonged to your parents. After discovering this, the entire group moved their focus to your parents and your brother's family. Humair further said that during their probe, as well as four of them severely abused my father and brother.

**July 12, 2015:** Following the phone call, my in-laws invited Asia, me, and the children to Tando Jam. Then, until we left the country, we were forced to hide at my in-laws' house. Then with Humair's support, we were able to sell our 1.1-million-rupees home for 0.7-million-rupees in just a few days.

**August 20, 2015:** Today, Asia, I, and our two sons finally flew from Karachi Airport to Bangkok.