



## **USCIRF Condemns Pakistan Sentencing Three Ahmadis to Death for Blasphemy**

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### **Press Release: USCIRF Condemns Pakistan Sentencing Three Ahmadis to Death for Blasphemy**

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*USCIRF Chairman Mark calls blasphemy laws “an assault on human rights and dignity”*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – According to media reports, three members of the Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan have been sentenced to death for blasphemy by a court in Sheikhpura, a town northwest of Lahore in the Punjab Province. [Daniel Mark](#), Chairman of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) stated that ***“Pakistan must repeal its blasphemy laws and immediately release all those imprisoned under those provisions. Blasphemy laws and the horrific acts they unleash are an assault on human rights and dignity.”***

A spokesman for the Ahmadiyya community has stated that Mubasher Ahmad, Ghulam Ahmed, and Ehsan Ahmed were sentenced last week to death after having been arrested in 2014. The spokesman further indicated that these individuals would challenge the court’s decision.

Chairman Mark, along with Commissioner [Thomas J. Reese](#), S.J., visited Pakistan in May of this year and met with a variety of religious minorities, including representatives of the Ahmadi community. As part of USCIRF’s [Religious Prisoners of Conscience Project](#), Chairman Mark has chosen to advocate on behalf of imprisoned Ahmadi member [Abdul Shakoor](#). After a speedy trial in an anti-terrorism court, Mr. Shakoor was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment under the Penal Code for blasphemy and three years under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

Pakistan’s constitution declares Ahmadis to be non-Muslims and the Penal Code makes it criminal for Ahmadis to refer to themselves as Muslims; preach, propagate, or disseminate materials on their faith; or refer to their houses of worship as mosques. ***“In short,”*** added Chairman Mark, ***“Ahmadis are required to renounce their faith in order to avail themselves of important civil rights in Pakistan.”***

***“This latest case,”*** said Chairman Mark, ***“reinforces that there is no excuse for the blasphemy provisions in Article 295 of the Pakistani Penal Code to even exist. USCIRF has consistently called on Pakistan to repeal such laws. They violate human rights standards and make the government the ultimate arbiter of religious doctrines or truths. This is quite simply wrong.”***

Additional USCIRF resources on blasphemy and Pakistan:

2017 Annual Report (Pakistan chapter – [English/Urdu](#))



[\*Respecting Rights? Measuring the World's Blasphemy Laws\*](#)

[Press release](#) for *Respecting Rights?*

[\*Selected Blasphemy Cases\*](#)

Chairman Mark [speaks](#) on behalf of Abdul Shakoor.

<http://www.uscifr.gov/news-room/press-releases/press-release-uscifr-condemns-pakistan-sentencing-three-ahmadis-death>

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