

URGENT ACTION

CHRISTIAN COUPLE ACQUITTED, TAKEN OFF DEATH ROW
Shafqat Emmanuel and Shagufta Kausar were finally acquitted on 3 June 2021, bringing their seven-year ordeal of being on death row to a close. While they never should have been charged and sentenced to death in the first place, their case served as further evidence of the danger enabled by the country's draconian blasphemy laws. The authorities must immediately provide Shafqat, Shagufta, their family and their lawyer Saiful Malook with adequate security.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

Shagufta Kausar and **Shafqat Emmanuel** faced execution for allegedly sending 'blasphemous' texts to a mosque cleric, from a phone containing a sim registered in Shagufta's name. The couple have consistently denied all allegations and believe Shagufta's National Identity Card was purposely misused. Imprisoned since 2013, the couple were convicted and sentenced to death in April 2014. Their appeal was due to be heard in April 2020, six years after they were sentenced, but it was postponed due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The judges deferred the hearing twice on their appeal in early 2021, citing court hours having concluded for the day.

During that time, Shafqat's health began to decline rapidly. Shafqat's lower body is paralyzed, which means he would rely on prison guards to help him with any mobility which is not readily available. He has multiple bed sores, which according to his lawyer, were not being given adequate medical treatment.

After two months, in June, their appeal hearing was finally heard in the Lahore High Court. On 3 June, they were acquitted of all charges and the judge ordered that they be released from jail immediately.

Their acquittal provoked a strong backlash online, where threats were levied against not only the couple but also their lawyer. Saif ul Malook told Amnesty International that he fears for his life. Amnesty International will continue to lobby for their safety and security.

Their lawyer told Amnesty International that without the campaign, it would have been unlikely that Shafqat and Shagufta would have had their charges dropped against them. It is believed that global mobilisation of Amnesty International supporters was indispensable in drawing attention to the case, which served as a reminder of just how dangerous Pakistan's blasphemy laws can be.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Shafqat Emmanuel (he/him) and Shagufta Kausar (she/her)

THIS IS THE THIRD AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 27/21

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa33/3974/2021/en/>