

Persecution in Pakistan unites the Pakistani Christian community in Canada



Shadab Khokhar

On August 15th, 2009 the leaders of the Pakistan Christian community came together to bow their heads to pray for the martyrs of Gojra, Pakistan, and the strengthening of faith of the Christians living in Pakistan.

The men of the cloth, Vice Consul General of Pakistan, Toronto, social workers, political leaders and the Pakistani media came together to pray, share their concerns and worries about the growing wave of persecution in Pakistan.

The historic meeting was organized and coordinated by 'International Christian AWAZ, Canada', hosted by 'Asian Christian Alliance Church', Mississauga, Ontario.

The community leaders and organizations that joined hands to condemn the recent wave of persecution in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan were as follows:



Akhtar Din

Pastor Samuel Gori, *All Nations Bible Church, Mississauga, ON*, Pastor Carol Patrick, *Asian Christian Alliance Church, Mississauga, ON*, Obaid Chaudry, *Canadian Christian Association, Mississauga, ON*, Pastor Wilson Nazim, *First Asian Canadian Bible Church, Brampton, ON*, Pastor James Luke, *Lutheran Church of Canada, Shadab Khokhar, International Christian AWAZ, Canada*, Akhtar Din, *Chair, Asian Christian Alliance Church, Mississauga, ON*, Pastor Salim Arthur, *South Asian Bible Church, Mississauga, ON*, Daniel Charles, *Ministries of 153, Hamilton, ON*, Pastor Alexander David, *New Covenant Church of Canada, Brampton, ON*, Pastor Javed Akhtar, *Redeemer South Asian Fellowship, Hamilton, ON*

Dr. Rashid Gill, Rev. Manir Din and Bro. Younis Joseph were also in attendance.

Pastor Ranga Masih, Pastor Sam Sahota and Pastor Parkash Masih, represented the Indian congregations of Greater Toronto Area.

The Worship service was conducted by Akhtar Din and all Pastors shared the word of God to uplift the spirit of the Christian community living in the greater Toronto area. The local leaders were very vocal to detail their grievances as for the first time ever the Vice Consul General, Asim Ali Khan, prominent members of the Muslim community and the Pakistani press were there to listen to the pain and the worries of the Pakistani Christian community living in Canada.

Other than the Consul General of Pakistan, Liaqat Malik, Chair, Pakistan Peoples Party, Canada, Tareq Fatah, Host, 'Islamic Chronicles' and co-host, 'Michael Coran Show', Expert on Pakistan Islamic Issues, Sohail Rana, Chief Editor, 'Weekly Khabarnamma', Mississauga, ON, Samina Ahmad, Host and producer, 'Aadabsamina', Omni TV, Waqas



Samuel Gori



Asim Ali Khan



Liaqat Malik



Tareq Fatah

Gondal, 'Urdu Times'.

The truth about the sufferings of the Christians in Gojra, Punjab and the lengthy list of different incidents was shared by the speakers. The ongoing problem and sufferings of the Christians in Pakistan at the hands of the Islamic fundamentalists, the rise of fundamentalism in Pakistan and the growing insecurity of Christians living in Pakistan was echoed throughout the afternoon. The common consensus of the speakers and the audience alike was the repeal of the 'Blasphemy Law', in Pakistan.

Shadab Khokhar, Chair, International Christian AWAZ, Canada', shared the realities of the harassment, insecurity and fear among the Christians living in Pakistan.

'International Christian AWAZ, Canada' is the pioneer in the world for the organized struggle against 'Blasphemy Law', outside Pakistan, we vow to continue the struggle to the day till we rid the people of Pakistan of discriminatory laws, such as the 'Blasphemy Law', say Khokhar. Khokhar, was appreciative of the fact that it was the first time in 62 years, the provincial and the federal governments of Pakistan have taken a serious note of the ugly religiously motivated incident in Gojra, Punjab, Pakistan. As the proof lies in the action, the chief Minister of Punjab and the Prime Minister of Pakistan visited Gojra and announced financial packages for the families of the deceased, affected residents of Gojra and nearby village Korian.

The government of Pakistan is taking concrete steps to prevent such religiously motivated incidences of terrorism and criminal activity, as a promise by the Prime Minister of Pakistan to consider the repeal of the blasphemy law is a ray of hope for the Pakistani Christians living in Pakistan and abroad, shares Khokhar with the emotional crowd present in the Church.

Chair, Pakistan Peoples Party, Canada, Liaqat Malik condemned the Gojra incidence and all such incidences committed by criminals in Pakistan. Malik stressed that the criminals that kill non-Muslims in the name of religion should be severely punished by the law of the land. Tarek Fatah, was extremely vocal, criticized and condemned the killing and looting in Gojra and offered condolences to the community. Fatah, was of the opinion that it's not the 'Blasphemy Law', that causes the troubles for the Christians living in Pakistan but illiteracy is the real problem. He quoted examples of countless killings in Bangladesh by Muslims, Swat valley killings and countless bomb blasts in mosques, police stations and shopping plaza's, where Muslims are killing Muslims. A terrorist or a criminal mind does not need a 'Blasphemy law', to kill and create destruction. A criminal, an enemy of Pakistan and an enemy of Islam does not need any law to support a criminal activity. Fatah, shared with the audience that he did not celebrate August 14 (Independence Day) as a protest, protesting the killings in Gojra, Pakistan.



Wilson Nazim



Salim Arthur



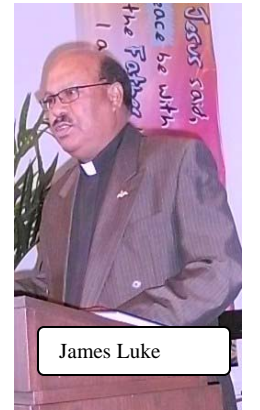
Javed Akhtar



Javed Iqbal



Alexander David



James Luke



Carol Patrick



Munir Din

The Vice Consul General demonstrated great patience as he attentively listened to the nine speakers, the emotional temperature in the Church was high as all speakers directly addressed the Vice Consul.

The Vice Consul, addressed the audience highlighting the famous statement of the father of the nation, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, August 11th, 1947. "You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed, which has nothing to do with the business of the State".

Asim Ali Khan, offered his condolences and regrets to the community leaders and the audience, expressed deep sadness at the killings in Gojra. Khan shared the role of the Provincial and the Federal governments to compensate the affected and at the same time repeated the stance of the Pakistan government that the convicted culprits will be dealt with severity. Khan shared the positive steps taken by the government such as creating a Ministry of Minority, allocating 5% quota for the minorities in every walk of life. Asim Ali Khan concluded that as long as the stars and the sun shine in the sky, Pakistan will stay.

An appeal was made by Akhtar Din to financially support the victims of Gojra and there was an offering. Any individual or organization interested to contribute, contact christianawaz@gmail.com.

The worship service was well attended, after the meeting the attendees met over a cup of tea.



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