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Agenda item 2

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Written statement* submitted by Nord-Sud XXI - North-South XXI, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[16 August 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Victim of Pakistan's Draconian Blasphemy Law

Mohammed Irfan, the victim charged under blasphemy law, was apprehended on February 2, 2017, when he allegedly committed blasphemy. A case was lodged under 295-C against the accused by the Hoti police station in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

The anti-terrorism court recently slapped a fine of Rs 0.4 million on accused and gave him ten years imprisonment.

As per The News International (Pakistan's leading English daily) The incident back to February 2017, when Irfan went to a mosque in the city's Guli Bagh neighbourhood and announced himself as a prophet over the loudspeakers. His announcement triggered the local residents who rushed to the mosque shortly. Members of Tablighi Jamaat caught him and handed over to police.

The police detained him and lodged a case under the blasphemy statute along with two other sections of law. He is languishing in prison ever since his arrest without bail or proper legal recourse.

Although the blasphemy law that Pakistan inherited from the British colonialists may have been designed to protect religious freedom for all of the country's citizens that law has since evolved in ways that threaten the physical safety of Pakistani citizens. Most vulnerable among these are Pakistanis belonging to a religious minority and those having a serious mental illness.

How Pakistan will deal with these challenges, while navigating its identity as a Muslim-majority country, remains to be seen. In the meantime, psychiatrists and other mental health professionals are in a unique position to shape the discussion about the impact of these laws on human rights.

<https://www.tribune.com.pk/story/2419586/mardan-court-convicts-man-of-blasphemy?amp=1>
<https://jaapl.org/content/early/2020/01/24/JAAPL.003916-20>