



1.4.2012

## PAKISTAN CSW marks first anniversary of Salmaan Taseer's killing

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One year ago, the Governor of Pakistan's Punjab province, Salmaan Taseer, was shot and killed by one of his bodyguards, Mumtaz Qadri, for supporting a Christian blasphemy defendant and criticizing Pakistan's blasphemy laws. A vigil has taken place in his memory in Islamabad today.

Two months after Taseer's death, fellow politician Shahbaz Bhatti was assassinated for his outspoken stance against the same legislation. State actors have remained largely silent on the issue since then.

In August 2011, Salmaan Taseer's son, Shahbaz, was abducted and he has not been freed to date. His family members have been among the small number who continue to speak out publicly against the blasphemy laws and other forms of intolerance and injustice in Pakistan.

In October 2011, Qadri was convicted of the killing for which he has admitted responsibility from the beginning. His sentence triggered a new wave of protests from those supporting his act and death threats which forced the judge in the case to flee Pakistan with his family.

Asia Bibi, the Christian supported by both Taseer and Bhatti after being sentenced to death for blasphemy in November 2010, remains in prison, with little indication that her appeal will be heard in the near future.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide's (CSW's) South Asia Team Leader David Griffiths, said, "Our thoughts and prayers are with the Taseer family today, in continued sympathy for their loss and in solidarity with all those who work for justice in Pakistan. The events of 2011, including the extreme reaction to Qadri's conviction in October, are a stark reminder that those who support the blasphemy law in Pakistan show no sign of diluting their views or rejecting vigilantism. CSW is committed to supporting initiatives in Pakistan that challenge this state of affairs and promote freedoms of religion and expression."

### **Note to Editors:**

For further background, see CSW's briefing, [Pakistan: Religious freedom in the shadow of extremism](#)