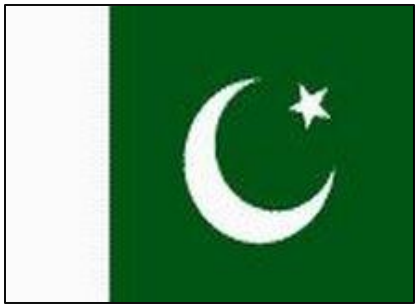

CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY WORLDWIDE USA
VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

11.20.12

PAKISTAN | Rimsha Masih Case Thrown Out by High Court

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) in Pakistan on Nov. 20 ordered that the case against Rimsha Masih, the young Christian girl accused of blasphemy in August, be thrown out.

Last week the IHC reserved its judgment on an application from Rimsha Masih's lawyers for the original charge to be annulled. Her lawyers contended that the charge was fabricated and cited the girl's age and learning difficulties as reasons for dismissal. During the hearing, IHC Chief Justice Iqbal Hameed ur Rahman ordered the police to dismiss the First Information Report filed against her. Her accuser's lawyers retain the right to appeal the decision.

Rimsha's actual trial has been on hold since Sept. 28, when the IHC restrained the lower court from moving forward while it deliberated.

Rimsha, who is deemed to be 14 years old but with a younger mental age, was charged with desecrating the Qur'an under section 295B of the Pakistan Penal Code. She has been out on bail for over two months and is in hiding with her family. Rimsha's case has attracted support from senior Islamic clerics in Pakistan, as well as a high level of international attention. A revised charge sheet submitted by police in September indicated that no evidence had been found to support the accusation against her.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "This is extremely welcome news – we applaud the IHC for making the decision and enabling reason and the rule of law to prevail in Rimsha's case. It is unusual for a blasphemy charge to be thrown out in this manner and the result is testimony to the wisdom of her legal team, from the All Pakistan Minorities Alliance, in approaching the IHC. The security of Rimsha and her family remains a priority concern, as a favorable court ruling does not guarantee personal safety in blasphemy cases, and this decision may yet be challenged. Moreover, it remains to be seen whether the man accused of framing Rimsha will be held accountable. If he is, it will be a sign of the kind of progress stressed by Pakistan during its Universal Periodic Review at the UN last month, and may well make others think twice before misusing the laws in a similar fashion."