

Lahore Muslims support Christian accused of blasphemy

Several Muslim leaders showed up at a police station here to rally behind an elderly Christian man who was accused of blasphemy by his servant and jailed.

The Muslim leaders joined Christians, local traders and other residents in support of Walter Fazal Khan Khan, 79. They asked the police Saturday to investigate if the servant, Raja Riaz, was part of a conspiracy to grab the Samanabad house Khan lives in, estimated to be worth Rs.12.4 million.

On May 9, Walter was bathing in the morning when Riaz knocked at his door and told him that something was burning in the house. The burnt book was found to be a copy of the Koran.

Riaz ran out immediately, called local clerics and tried to beat Walter. Police were called and a case lodged against Walter under Section 295-B of the Pakistan Penal Code.

Walter's son, Najam Fazal Khan, has moved the Lahore High Court and sought the court's bailiff to recover Gladys, his 84-year-old mother, from the house.

When the son went with the court authorities, he found his mother too sick and unable to speak. She was taken to a hospital.

Gladys had, according to the servant's complaint, converted to Islam May 9, the night the blasphemy case was registered against Walter. She was also ostracised and not allowed to meet her relations, particularly Najam.

Dozens of traders, neighbours and many residents of the area went to meet Superintendent of Police (Investigation) Pervez Kandhari at the Samanabad police station and said that people realised later that it could be a false case. They suspected the servant could have conspired against Walter to take over his house.

The police officer assured the people that the case would be investigated carefully, the Daily Times said Sunday.

Some police authorities admitted that the case had been lodged in haste due to pressure from the public.

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