

## **Child Trafficking Involved in Pakistan Murder Case**

### **12-Year-Old Christian Sold as Slave**

LAHORE, Pakistan, FEB. 17, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://Zenit.org)).- New details are suggesting that a 12-year-old Pakistani Christian who was raped, tortured and killed is one of many victims of child trafficking in that country.

Shazia Masih died Jan. 21 in a Lahore hospital after her employer allegedly raped and tortured her.

The girl, who was from a poor Catholic family, was working as a servant for a Muslim lawyer, Chaudry Muhammad Naeem, in Lahore.

Fides reported Tuesday that further investigation into Shazia's case has led back to a ring of organized crime based on child trafficking. In this system, children are taken from their poor families, often Christian, who are deceived into believing that there is dignified work for them among wealthier families.

The children are thus sold as slaves, "at the mercy of their employer," and "living practically under arrest," the press release stated.

It reported that Shazia's parents, Nasreen Bibi and Bashir Masih, were approached by a man named Amanat Masih, who was later discovered to be a broker in child trafficking.

He promised a better life for the young girl, offering his contacts with the wealthy families of Lahore. The parents agreed to let Shazia go, and Amanat sold her to the lawyer.

### **Trouble**

The parents soon realized that things were not as they believed when they went to Naeem's home to inquire after their daughter, and were sent away without seeing her. They made another attempt, but the lawyer withheld Shazia and any wages she should have earned.

They prayed and waited until Jan. 21, the press release stated, when the lawyer showed up at their home with the lifeless body of the girl, saying that she "had fallen down the stairs" and offering them money for their silence.

Thousands attended the Jan. 25 funeral.

[AsiaNews](#) reported Tuesday that Naeem, who was taken into custody after Shazia's death, was released Saturday on bail.

Naeem's lawyer made his case by arguing in court that the victim's autopsy report did not prove she was murdered, but rather stated that she died from an infection of old injuries.

However, Christians are protesting both the judge's decision and the autopsy report, which they say was falsified.

Witnesses, including Shazia's family, affirm that her body showed signs of torture and sexual abuse, with 16 incision wounds from both a sharp-edged weapon and a rusty blade, fractured ribs and right arm, a damaged skull and plucked-out nails.

#### Discoveries

The Centre for Legal Aid, Assistance and Settlement and the Human Liberation Commission of Pakistan are backing the Christian protest, claiming that the doctors, police, and justice system are collaborating to falsely acquit Naeem, who is a former president of the Lahore Bar Association, a powerful group of lawyers in that area.

As well, the report noted that any Christian lawyer who stepped up to defend Shazia's family received death threats.

Meanwhile, a 28-year-old woman visited the victim's family, revealing that her son, Naveed, and daughter, Arti, had also disappeared after Amanat promised to find them employment.

Police arrested the child trafficking broker on Jan. 23, and through their interrogations, extracted enough information to rescue five children, including Naveed and Arti.

These children told the police that they had been prohibited from seeing each other and talking to their parents on the phone.