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Pakistan Supreme Court Acquits Two Brothers After 20 Years in Blasphemy Case

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"The appellants have spent around 20 years behind bars. In the light of the opinion of medical board which raises doubts regarding the culpability of the appellants, the benefit of doubt cannot be withheld from the appellants,"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Pakistan's Supreme Court has acquitted two brothers who spent about 20 years in prison on blasphemy charges, setting aside death sentences that had been upheld by the Lahore High Court more than a decade ago. Liaqat Ali and Umar Draz walked free after the court ruled on Saturday, 7 November 2026, that psychiatric evidence raised reasonable doubt about whether they were criminally responsible for the alleged offence. Both men had lived under a death sentence for most of their adult lives.

The case began in 2006 with a marital dispute. According to the complaint, Umar Draz began making explicit blasphemous statements, and the dispute with his wife ended in divorce on 13 March 2006. Draz expressly affirmed in writing his conversion from Islam in the divorce papers.

During the return of his former wife's dowry articles, a written document authored by his brother Liaqat Ali was recovered, and it also contained blasphemous assertions.

On 18 March 2006, the complainant and witnesses confronted the brothers over the alleged material. Both men acknowledged the contents of the documents and said they were willing to repeat their assertions before any forum. Nine days later, on 27 March 2006, a sessions judge in Jhang convicted both brothers under Section 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code, sentenced them to death, and fined each of them Rs500,000, with five years of rigorous imprisonment in default.

Twenty years is a long time to wait for a court to ask whether a man understood what he was doing. The brothers' appeals reached the Supreme Court as Criminal Appeal No. 96 Of 2020, after the Lahore High Court dismissed their appeals and upheld the convictions on 17 September 2015.

A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice Yahya Afridi, with Justices Shakeel Ahmad and Ishtiaq Ibrahim, heard the appeals. The main judgment was authored by Justice Ibrahim. Before the Supreme Court, the brothers' counsel confined his submissions to one plea: mental unsoundness, arguing that the men lacked the requisite guilty mind at the time of the alleged offence.

The court examined three psychiatric assesments, and they told three different stories. An initial three-member medical board at DHQ Hospital in Faisalabad found both men mentally sound in 2007. But an eight-member Board of Certification diagnosed them in 2023 with bipolar affective disorder with psychotic symptoms.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

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