

CLAAS is pursuing blasphemy case of Sawan Masih which is pending in Lahore High Court Lahore and Zafar Bhatti case is pending before Rawalpindi Bench Lahore High Court.

After the Asia Bibi's case, the case of Sawan Masih become most highlighted and the courts are reluctant to hear his appeal. On September 17th 2019 case of Sawan Masih was fixed before the Divisional Bench of Lahore High Court Lahore headed by Mr. Justice Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi (Judge). The CLAAS lawyer along with Mr. Joseph Francis, National Director were present inside the court, case was called on its turn but the Judge refused to hear the appeal and sent the same for another bench.

The similar things happened in the blasphemy case of Zafar Bhatti in which on October 10, 2019 CLAAS lawyer along with Mr. Joseph Francis were present in the court for hearing. The Judge refused to hear the case of Zafar Bhatti by simply saying that "my conscious does not allow me to hear this case" and sent the case file to the senior Judge for its fixation.

The reason behind the refusal is that after the acquittal of Asia Bibi a countrywide protest was made by the Muslims religious organizations in which numbers of invaders vandalized and ransacked the public property and created panic among the society. CLAAS is of the view that due to the pressure of religious fanatic groups the courts are hesitant to decide the blasphemy cases and always tried to shift their burden by making lame excuses and adjourned the cases without hearing the arguments.

The situation in two above said cases made the CLAAS very disappointed by conduct of Superiors Judiciary and due to the unwanted behavior of the courts, on October 15th 2019 CLAAS was constrained to write an application to the Chief Justice of Supreme Court of Pakistan and Chief Justice of Lahore High Court Lahore for fixation and early disposal of above said both cases. On this application the Chief Justice of Lahore High Court Lahore by allowing the same fixed both the appeals, i.e. the case of Sawan Masih on 13th of November 2019 and Zafar Bhatti on 14th of November 2019.

In Sawan Masih's case on 13th of November 2019 CLAAS lawyer was present in the Divisional Bench headed by Chief Justice of Lahore High Court but due to the rush of work court adjourned the case for next date of hearing on 27th November 2019. On today court issued notice to the complainant through concerned police station for appearing in the court for final arguments on December 12, 2019.

In Zafar Bhatti's case on 14th November 2019 CLAAS lawyer appeared before the court of Mr. Justice Muhammad Tariq Abbasi Judge of High Court at Rawalpindi Bench. Before starting the argument the Judge asked a question to CLAAS lawyer that why this case had not been heard by the previous judge upon which, the lawyer disclosed that as the case is of religious nature and most of judges refused to hear like such cases. The judge said to the CLAAS lawyer that he will hear the case and definitely decide. At the time of hearing case was partially heard. CLAAS lawyer gave some initial points into the knowledge of the Judge and disclosed the gist of the case which was taken into the consideration by the court. The court also heard from complaint side and the hearing was continued about 30 minutes. Finally the judge put three questions before the complaint and the Investigation Officer (IO) of the case who was also present at the time of hearing and seeks the answers of those questions on the next date of hearing for December 16, 2019.

We kindly request you please remember Sawan Masih and Zafar Bhatti in your prayers. May Our God Almighty give us victory and release them from the prison.

We hope and pray that May God continue to give courage and strength to the presiding Judges so that they may deliver honest and fair verdict.