Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 28, 2014

Nasir-ul-Mulk
Chief Justice
Supreme Court of Pakistan
Constitution Avenue, G-5/2
Islamabad, Pakistan

Dear Chief Justice Nasir-ul-Mulk,

We write to you on behalf of a mother of five, a minority Christian woman, and your fellow citizen, Aasia Bibi. As you know, Aasia Bibi has been appealing a pending death sentence since it was first handed down in November 2010. In a grave setback for the recognition of Aasia Bibi's fundamental and internationally respected human rights, as well as for Pakistan's commitment to its international obligations, the Lahore High Court recently upheld her conviction and sentencing. We implore you, as the head of the court of last reprieve and final arbiter of disputes in Pakistan, as well as one of the most respected institutions in your nation, to overturn the conviction and work towards the release of Aasia Bibi expediently and without condition.

As we are sure you are aware, the government of the United States has long advocated for the reform or repeal of the very laws under which Aasia Bibi was convicted and sentenced, those under the Pakistan Penal Code that prohibit blasphemy against any recognized religion. We echo our government's past concerns regarding these laws, as they stand in stark violation of Pakistan's international commitments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 18. Notably, Pakistan was one of the original members of the United Nations to vote in favor of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and your government ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights shortly before Aasia Bibi's death sentence was first handed down. Furthermore, we contend that this blasphemy law violates Pakistan's own constitutional protections, including the security of persons and the professing of one's religion, and further jeopardizes Aasia Bibi's constitutional rights as it relates to her right to a fair trial.

We are concerned with Aasia's case not only with respect to it being the cardinal case stemming from these controversial laws, but also with respect to her individual rights and the specific conditions of her alleged crime, trial, conviction and sentencing.

Aasia Bibi's alleged crime has been tainted by partial facts, prejudice and the inconsistent testimony of her accusers. Significant evidence contradicts the claims of those present at the time of her alleged insult of the Prophet Muhammad. It is highly likely that Aasia Bibi was targeted due to an unrelated business quarrel. Moreover, the fact that the incident occurred while

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she was drinking out of the same well as a group of Muslim women, a violation of local social mores, casts further doubt upon the allegations.

Furthermore, Aasia Bibi's trial and imprisonment is marked by controversy and violations of her rights protected by Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The initial witnesses testifying against her were not cross-examined, and the complainant who pressed charges against her is not an eye-witness. His entire testimony was based on hearsay that was never questioned. The appeals to her conviction underwent numerous delays, having been postponed five times over almost four years, further jeopardizing her right to due process. Her imprisonment has been marked by abuse, isolation and frailty as a result of her poor treatment.

The passion, politicization and partiality surrounding blasphemy cases, including Aasia's, makes finding a sound ruling within Pakistan's legal system virtually impossible. Because the blasphemy laws lack requirements of proof of intent or evidence to be presented with the allegations, there is a history of the laws' abuse by those whose goal is to intimidate minorities like Aasia Bibi instead of defending their own religion.

Due to the sectarian and religious overtones surrounding the law, courtrooms are often packed with those publicly threatening violence in the face of an acquittal. Defense lawyers seeking acquittals and the judges who sometimes issue them are systemically harassed and threatened. Indeed, Aasia Bibi's case has been tainted by many of these improprieties and intimidations that should have no place in a court of law.

It is a travesty that Aasia Bibi has been facing this unjust charge for so long. That her only option is to appeal to your court to spare her life is an egregious injustice for her and all that live under Pakistan's legal system. No one in Pakistan has been executed for the "crime" of blasphemy. We implore you to immediately and unconditionally overturn her conviction at the very least to ensure she is not the first. We further ask that you consider using all of your powers as Chief Justice and the de jure and de facto powers of your Court to dismiss her conviction and secure her release before another appeal needs to be heard. In addition, we ask that you take sufficient steps to ensure the protection of her and her family upon her release, as countless individuals merely accused of blasphemy have been murdered.

Mr. Chief Justice, a further upholding of this conviction and the ensuing death sentence threatens to undermine Pakistan's commitment to the rule of law. Pakistan and the United States have enjoyed a long and substantial relationship based on our shared commitment to the fundamental principles of British Common Law, and to the rule of law under our respective constitutions. However, we view the blasphemy laws as profoundly at odds with these principles, as well as being an obstacle to broader U.S.-Pakistan relations. As a former office bearer of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and human rights activist, we believe you are in a special position to convince your fellow jurists and your country at large of the need to secure the immediate release of Aasia Bibi. We trust that the better angels of our nature will touch and guide your society's acceptance of her acquittal and the defense of your judgment – as will we.

Thank you in advance for the consideration of our requests. We eagerly await the events of her appeal and anticipated release.

Sincerely,

Rep. Joseph R. Pitts
Member of Congress

Sen. Ted Cruz
Member of Congress

Rep. James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Sen. Rob Portman
Member of Congress

Rep. Steve Chabot
Member of Congress

Sen. Marco Rubio
Member of Congress

Rep. Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Sen. Roy Blunt
Member of Congress

Rep. Reid J. Ribble
Member of Congress

Sen. James Inhofe
Member of Congress

Rep. Mike McIntyre
Member of Congress

Sen. Orrin Hatch
Member of Congress

Rep. Erik Paulsen
Member of Congress

Sen. Jerry Moran
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Rep. Trent Franks
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Rep. James Lankford
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Rep. Jeff Fortenberry
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Rep. Steve Daines
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Rep. Jack Kingston
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Rep. Kenny Marchant
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Rep. Jeff Duncan
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Rep. Vicky Hartzler
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Rep. Brad R. Wenstrup
Member of Congress

Rep. Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress

Rep. Randy K. Weber
Member of Congress

Rep. Keith J. Rothfus
Member of Congress

cc: Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister, Islamic Republic of Pakistan
Jalil Abbas Jilani, Ambassador, Embassy of The Islamic Republic of Pakistan
Abrar Hassan, Chairman Executive, Pakistan Bar Council