

# Church calls for end to Pakistan blasphemy law

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- 'Outdated' law is fuelling interreligious violence

**The Methodist Church in Britain is calling on the Pakistani government to repeal its controversial blasphemy law, and is encouraging Christians to sign an online petition.**

The blasphemy law includes clauses that forbid defiling the Quran and defaming the prophet Mohammed. Under the current law, defiling the Quran merits imprisonment for life and defaming Mohammed merits death with or without a fine.

There is concern that the law is enflaming tensions between Christians and Muslims in Pakistan, and is being used to justify violence against Christians. In late July, three churches and 147 homes were burned during violent attacks against Christians that left ten dead and made more than 290 families homeless.

The President of the Methodist Conference, the Revd David Gamble, has signed the petition (available at <http://pakistansignnow.petitionhost.com/#sign>) and is urging others to do likewise.

David said; "The blasphemy law is being used by some to fuel violence between people of faith in Pakistan, rather than creating respect as it was once designed to do. Atrocities such as those we have seen committed against Christians in recent days must be stopped and the Pakistani Government needs to prove its commitment to protecting religious minorities by repealing this outdated law."

So far more than 1,600 people have signed the petition, which has been formulated by Christians and Muslims together and will be delivered to the Pakistan Government, urging them to help prevent further attacks.

ENDS

## **Notes**

1. A hi-res image of David is available for download at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/methodistmedia>.