

## **Press Release**

### **Women's Action Forum, Lahore**

WAF strongly condemns the harassment and persecution under the Blasphemy Law of Walter Fazal a seventy-nine year old man, Nadir Ali, who it is claimed, is mentally challenged, the attack on the Christian nurses at PIMS and widespread intimidation of Christian communities. The first two have been accused of burning pages from the Quran and the nurses for removing framed Quranic verses. There is no evidence whether any of these alleged activities took place as a matter of fact no one actually claims to have witnessed the accused in all three instances.

What Walter Fazal and Nadir Ali have in common is valuable property on which their accusers have an eye. Clearly in this instance, the Blasphemy Law, which is open to exploitation by bigots and vested interests, provides a convenient cover for land grabbers. The attack on the nurses is an instance of religious bigotry and prejudice by a group that has scant respect for the law and uses religion to forward its own vested interests.

WAF strongly condemns the pressure being exerted on the Christian communities in Charsadda, through threats of violence, urging them to adopt Islam. The right to religious belief and practice is an inalienable human right that is guaranteed in the Constitution of Pakistan.

Since its inception the Blasphemy Law has been used for personal gains, such as land grabbing, settling personal grudges and fanning communal hatred. WAF demands that the government takes strong steps to ensure the safety of non-Muslims in Pakistan and protects their right to practice their religion freely and without fear of persecution. WAF also reiterates its claim that the Blasphemy Law is a mala fide law and that it should be repealed in the interests of building a fair and tolerant society.