

# SHERAZ BUTT

YEARS ON DEATH ROW: 7

MENTAL ILLNESS:  
SCHIZOPHRENIA

IMPRISONED AT: HOSPITAL CELL,  
CENTRAL JAIL, LAHORE

## LATEST DEVELOPMENT

*Criminal Appeal currently pending before the Supreme Court*

## CASE TIMELINE

● 2008

29<sup>th</sup> Jan: Alleged offence takes place

● 2012

20<sup>th</sup> Feb: Trial Court **sentences Sheraz to death** under Section 302(b) of the Pakistan Penal Code

● 2013

9<sup>th</sup> Oct: Consultant from Services Hospital visits Sheraz and reports abnormal behaviour, auditory hallucinations, delusions and irrelevant speech

● 2014

29<sup>th</sup> Jan: Central Jail Hospital prescribes anti-psychotic medication Risperidone

● 2016

20<sup>th</sup> Jun: Lahore High Court dismisses subsequent appeal

Aug: Appeal filed in Supreme Court

19<sup>th</sup> Nov: Central Jail, Lahore conducts another medical test on Sheraz, which reports hallucinations, irrelevant talk, sleep deprivation and poor self-care ability

*Sheraz Butt was sentenced to death in 2012 for fatally stabbing his mother four years earlier at his residence in Lahore. Signs of his mental illness were apparent long before the incident occurred, but he was first diagnosed with schizophrenia by jail authorities in 2016.*

*Despite multiple medical examinations confirming Sheraz's mental illness over the years, he continues to remain on death row.*

*He is currently incarcerated in Central Jail, Lahore.*

## BACKGROUND

Sheraz Butt was sentenced to death in 2012 for fatally stabbing his mother at his residence in Lahore in 2008. Though he was diagnosed with schizophrenia much later, signs of his mental illness were apparent earlier. Sheraz had attempted another knife attack on his parents a week before the incident. His parents had reported it to the police and had also referred him to the Pakistan Institute of Mental Health (PIMH) but he had refused to take any medications. Sheraz repeatedly claimed that a “*junoon*” had taken over him that had led him to commit the crime.

He has spent seven years on death row even though multiple medical tests have confirmed him to be suffering from acute mental illness. According to Sheraz's medical records from his treatment at the psychiatric cell at the Jail Hospital, he has been visited seven times by the psychiatrists from Punjab Institute of Mental Health (PIMH). This series of medical diagnosis and examinations carried out between the years 2013 and 2017 consistently points to Sheraz's mental health as a classical representation of a patient suffering from ‘Schizophrenia’.

Despite his mental condition, the Lahore High Court turned down his criminal appeal in 2016 and upheld his death sentence.

His subsequent appeal is currently pending before the Supreme Court.

**Sheraz is a severely mentally ill man who belongs in a mental health facility, not strung up on the gallows in violation of Pakistani and international laws.**

## SHERAZ'S MENTAL ILLNESS

Dismal detention conditions and strong anti-psychotic medications have gravely affected Sheraz's condition. He continues to experience auditory and visual hallucinations, has lost orientation of time and space, and often speaks about himself in third person. He also says he hears voices that give him information about his family members.

# “IF A PERSON IS MENTALLY ILL, HOW CAN YOU HANG THEM?”

– FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE SAQIB NISAR,

during the hearing of mentally ill death row prisoners Kanizan Bibi and Imdad Ali

## BASIS OF COMMUTATION

Mentally ill defendants repeatedly slip through the cracks in Pakistan’s criminal justice system. The lack of mental health treatment and training in the criminal justice system, as well as in Pakistan generally, means that many individuals never even get diagnosed. In fact, for many indigent mentally ill defendants, their first contact with a mental health professional is in jail. As a member state of the United Nations, the Government of Pakistan has ratified a number of international human rights treaties that grant rights and special protections to persons suffering from mental illnesses. These include:

### ICCPR

The Human Rights Committee has recognized in various judgments that the execution of mentally ill prisoners is prohibited as cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment under Article 6 and 7 of the ICCPR.

The HRC held that the incarceration on “death row” and execution of a prisoner whose mental health had “seriously deteriorated” amounted to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.

## SAFEGUARDS GUARANTEEING PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF THOSE FACING THE DEATH PENALTY

The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1984 adopted "Safeguards Guaranteeing Protection of the Rights of Those Facing the Death Penalty". In the same year, the Safeguards were endorsed through a consensus by the UN General Assembly. The Safeguards constitute an enumeration of minimum standards to be applied in countries that still impose capital punishment.

The Third Safeguard states:

*“Persons below 18 years of age at the time of the commission of the crime shall not be sentenced to death, nor shall the death sentence be carried out on pregnant women, or on new mothers, or on persons who have become insane.”*

The third safeguard was amplified by the Economic and Social Council in 1988 with the words “persons suffering from mental retardation or extremely limited mental competence”.



Justice Project Pakistan is a non-profit organization based in Lahore that represents the most vulnerable Pakistani prisoners facing the harshest punishments, at home and abroad. JPP investigates, litigates, educates, and advocates on their behalf.

In recognition of our work, in December 2016, JPP was awarded with the National Human Rights Award, presented by the President of Pakistan.

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