

# Pakistani court sparks outrage by ruling 14-year-old Christian girl must stay married to alleged abductor

*From the [he Christian Post](#). These are the best English language reports I have been able to find; the others are mostly in Italian or Spanish, ie published in strong Christian countries who retain confidence in their faith.*

A Pakistani court has sparked outrage by ruling a 14-year-old Christian girl was legally married to a Muslim man who allegedly abducted her at gunpoint.



In a case that has renewed focus on the persecution of Pakistan's Christian minority, the Lahore High Court ruled on Tuesday that Maira Shahbaz had willingly converted to Islam and married Mohamad Nakash.

The girl and her family claim that she was kidnapped in April by Mr Nakash and two accomplices from near her home in the city of Faisalabad. If the ruling is not reversed, Ms Shahbaz will have to return to Mr Nakash's home from the shelter she was temporarily placed in.

Mr Nakash, who is already married, tried to claim Ms Shahbaz was 19-years-old but this was discounted by the victim's family who produced birth certificates and school records to show she was a minor. Mohamad Nakash... is accused of presenting a false marriage certificate to a lower court. The document not only fails to provide proof of consent from Nakash's first wife, with whom he has two children, but the Muslim cleric whose name is listed on the certificate has denied involvement.

in the sham marriage.

After this evidence was provided last week, a local court ruled Ms Shahbaz should be removed from Mr Nakash's house and placed in a girls' shelter, pending further investigation.

However, that decision was reversed on Tuesday by a court with a greater jurisdiction in Pakistan. The victim's lawyer, Khalil Tahir Sandhu, claimed 150 of Mr Nakash's associates arrived at the court. "It is unbelievable. What we have seen today is an Islamic judgement. The arguments we put forwards were very strong and coherent," Mr Sandhu told the Independent Catholic News (ICN).

"With this ruling, no Christian girl in Pakistan is safe," echoed Pakistani Christian advocate, Lala Robin Daniel. Daniel added that had Maira been ordered to stay in Nakash's home, she might have been forced to become a sex worker.

Ms Shahbaz was brought to tears by the ruling and her mother refused to speak to the media immediately afterwards, according to the ICN. . . Ms Shahbaz's family has said they will appeal the decision and take it to the highest court in Pakistan to get their daughter back.

Nakash has filed a counter-complaint alleging harassment against the girl's mother, Nighat Shahbaz, and Daniel.