



## Yet another reprieve

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One has to salute the patience of Judge Younus Al Shamshi and the Sharia Courts of Sharjah; on the 14<sup>th</sup> hearing of the very sensitive case of 17 Indians on death row for the alleged murder of 1, Shamshi has had to once again hand down a month's reprieve for both victim and accused to come to a compromise in an amicable manner. Even despite the reluctance of the victim's representative Ramzaan who asked for Qasaas (retribution) again, Judge Shamshi cautioned Ramzaan, explained that if the compromise wasn't reached it would mean a long court battle for both the victim and accused, setting the next hearing for July 20<sup>th</sup>. In a tug-of-war and wills, over the compromise figures - with the victim's seeking a 1.5 Million US\$ settlement and the representative of the 17 Indians, Mr. S P Singh Oberio putting down only 120000.00 US\$ the process has hit a stalemate

Ramzaan, said the amount given was unacceptable and the dead man's family wasn't still willing to forgive the 17 accused, but given the situation Ramzaan felt he might be able to convince the victim's family to give pardon the 17 accused by offering them 1.5 Million US\$ in lieu for the same. Explaining his stance, Ramzaan stated that he had initially received a rather tempting offer of 20 crores (2 Million US\$) from Balajit Singh Khalsa, who claims to represent 'Sikhs for Justice' a powerful Sikh-America organization (all 17 accused are Sikhs). Judge Shamsi asked defence team whether they had a higher offer to make, Mohammed Salman replied that the only real offer was made by SP Oberoi who put 12000.00 US\$ and that was their final offer.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OdoKfQYTm8>

This prompted Ramzaan to insist he will only accept Qasas (retribution) informing the Sharjah High court that he was tired of the 'drama' being played out by Indian Politicians and Social Institutions, insisting he didn't need any extra time to negotiate a compromise. However Shamshi went on to grant time, recommending any possible negotiations on compromise are important. Outside the courts, Baljeet Singh Khalsa, insisted he could raise the sum but he wasn't being given access to the 17 accused to get the signature which he required to get funds. This thought can be completely discounted, as heartbroken Ranjeet Kaur, wife of one of the 17 accused refuted Khalsa's interference, stating that they had put their trust in Sharjah Courts and their defense teams.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OdoKfQYTm8>

Accusing Khalsa of sabotaging the case by promising an amount in 'compromise' that wasn't a possibility for them to raise, nor for their well-wishers, the families seem bitter at how Khalsa's vested interest had jeopardized the possibility of a compromise. Ramzaan's voice echoes the same bitterness. "At one point we were offered Dh5.5 million, and after the last hearing they offered 11000 US\$." S P Oberio however still seemed hopeful "I am making arrangements to send someone to Pakistan to meet the victim's family. Once the family agrees to pardon or accept blood money, the matter can be settled".

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aiQo6giAmRQ>

This isn't a new development, it's one that seems to have consistently failed since last year, but Ramzaan and Mustaq (one of the victims) shared a rare insight with us. Suggesting that it wasn't just about money, but the manner in which the forgiveness is asked, they suggested that the family members of the 17 cross border to make peace and ask for forgiveness. Explaining that it comes



down to humanity and the ability of people to rise beyond their own circumstances as many lives are at stake; hoping the families will be able to convince the victim's side to reach a fair compromise, in return of forgiveness.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQTbKcXtsko>

Given the emerging scenario, it seems even more urgent to set processes straight, laying precedent and important mandates for both emerging nations - UAE and India. Judge Shamsi continues to rip away misnomers surrounding the Islamic Courts through transparency. Now two major challenges he has to set precedent with a fair trial, in keeping with human rights proving its possible even in the staunchest Islamic State! With all this politicking has to uproot the elements misusing 'Blood Money' or compromise. This complex case has revealed a deeper insight into these sentencing patterns - Judge Shamsi's sentence will change systems and help the system to reassess the situation.. The 17 families are planning on going to Pakistan to personally seek forgiveness and to pay a fair compromise to the victim's families. Can they manage to find the resources, especially with the tumultuous Punjab Elections right around the corner? Back in Pakistan, it will be a trial for a bereaved mother and a young widow who have to find it in their heart to forgive. It's now test of goodness and humanity vs. egos and greed.

There is still hope <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aiQo6giAmRQ&feature=related>