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ANALYSIS BRIEF
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Junaid Jamshed and Pakistan's Battle Over Pardoning Blasphemy

Original analysis by **Swati Goel Sharma**

Junaid Jamshed's prosecution and rejected apology reopened the debate in Pakistan over whether blasphemy can be pardoned. Arafat Mazhar argued in Dawn that the court's 1991 ruling making the death penalty mandatory relied on a misreading of Hanafi scholarship on pardon.



A young Junaid Jamshed.

THE ESSENTIAL POINTS

- A 1991 Federal Shariat Court judgment removed the life-imprisonment option, making death the mandatory punishment upon conviction under Section 295C.
- Sunni Tehreek rejected Jamshed's public apology and demanded a trial, insisting that blasphemy against the Prophet deserved the death penalty.
- In March 2016, a crowd assaulted Jamshed at an airport; videos showed attackers accusing him of dishonouring Mohammed and Aisha.
- Writing in Dawn, Arafat Mazhar argued that blasphemy was pardonable and challenged the court's conclusion that an apology could never avert mandatory death.

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Updated from an original written by Swati Goel Sharma in June 2022. Summary prepared by Rashtra Jyoti Staff. Facts refer to the original reporting date.