

THE HINDU

[International](#) » [South Asia](#)

Published: November 23, 2013 20:24 IST | Updated: November 23, 2013 22:31 IST

Lakhvi's lawyer opts out of Mumbai attacks case

Meena Menon

The exit of the defence lawyers could slow down the pace of the trial in the case relating to the attacks on India's financial hub that killed 166 people in November 2008.

The defence lawyer for Lashkar-e-Taiba commander Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi who is suspected to have masterminded the Mumbai terror attacks, will no longer represent him in the ongoing case in Pakistan citing personal reasons.

Lawyer Riaz Akram Cheema told *The Hindu* on Sunday that he had taken a decision that from Saturday he was no longer concerned with the case and did not wish to continue defending Lakhvi and two other accused in the matter. He said he had personal reasons, mainly his mother who was suffering from blood cancer and that he wished to devote more time to her care. Mr. Cheema has been the defence lawyer right from 2009 when the case was filed but has not been appearing since the last few times. He had earlier assisted defence lawyers Khwaja Sultan Ahmed and later Khwaja Harris Ahmed who has also stopped appearing for the case four months ago. Mr. Cheema's assistant Fakr Hayat Awan was asked to discontinue after the Pakistan Judicial Commission returned from India in September after its second visit to Mumbai.

His other two clients were Shahid Jamir Riaz and Mohammed Yunus Anjum who are among the seven accused lodged in jail. He also represented them in India during the two visits of the Commission. Mr. Cheema had demanded access to Ajmal Kasab, the lone surviving terrorist of the Mumbai attacks during the first visit of the judicial commission in 2011 but was denied permission. He said that the Commission had demanded that Kasab be produced in court so he could be cross examined on his confession statement but that was disallowed by the chief metropolitan magistrate in

Mumbai. He said under Pakistan law unless the person who gave the confession statement is permitted to be cross examined it cannot serve as evidence. “We had a right to cross examine which was denied. Once Kasab was executed the case ended,” he added.

In addition he said even in Pakistan the evidence that was produced was not substantive and some of the witnesses had no real knowledge of what they claimed to know. There was no evidence regarding the control room from which allegedly the handlers and the masterminds operated and from the call records sent from India, there were no calls made to Kasab or by him to Pakistan.

The special public prosecutor in the Mumbai attacks case, Chaudhry Muhammed Azhar confirmed to *The Hindu* that the defence lawyers had stopped appearing since a few hearings. Now the accused were represented by Rizwan Abbasi who conducted the cross examination of two witnesses last week.

Keywords: [Mumbai attacks case](#), [Mumbai attacks defence lawyers](#), [Khwaja Haris Ahmad](#), [Riaz Akram Cheema](#)

Printable version | Feb 15, 2015 4:33:21 AM | <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/south-asia/lakhvis-lawyer-opts-out-of-mumbai-attacks-case/article5383699.ece>

© The Hindu