



ASIA/PAKISTAN - Catholic family home set on fire, threatened by three Muslims; police ignore claim

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) – Another episode of violence in recent days has targeted a Catholic family in Pakistan, as Agenzia Fides is informed by local Catholic sources. This time, it is the family of Walayat Masih, a resident in the village of Shadokey in the Gujranwala District, near Lahore .

Three Muslims have repeatedly threatened the family, asking Masih to sell his house, bordering theirs. Walayat Masih has always refused, given that the property, located on the main street of the village, is inherited from his ancestors. After numerous pressures and threats, this past January 26 the three, along with a group of other Muslims, burned down Masih's house, destroying it.

The abuse was completed by the demand that he "convert to Islam" and leave the area. Walayat Masih's family, his wife and 4 children, were suddenly left homeless, in poverty and desperation. Walayat visited the local police office to report the incident, but received other threats by the police who refused to register the complaint.

"It is a very serious act of intimidation. It is yet another case of patent injustice against Christian citizens. The institutions and the police should protect and uphold the law, instead of being complices in lawlessness," Xavier Williams, Vice-President of the NGO "Life for All," which works on education, social promotion and human rights of the Christian community in Pakistan, told Fides. "It seems that local authorities support or deny these blatant violations of personal rights," he remarked.

"Life for All" has seen to the family's care, helping them move to Rawalpindi, and placing the matter in the hands of a lawyer. They have filed the case in the High Court in Rawalpindi, suing the Shadokey police for negligence. The judges are investigating the incident and have summoned the leaders of the police station.

A similar dynamic occurred in another recent case, that of the Catholic girl Shazia, raped and murdered by a wealthy Muslim lawyer of Lahore (see Fides 25/1/2010). The police refused to register a complaint from the family and only after the clamor of protests was the case brought to the attention of the public, authorities, and the courts. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 15/02/2010)