



## **ASIA/PAKISTAN - Further investigations into anti-Christian attacks on Gojra and Korian, "a good sign in the fight against impunity"**

Faisalabad (Agenzia Fides) - The Government of the Punjab region (eastern Pakistan) has ordered a further investigations into the anti-Christian attacks in Gojra and Korian, which occurred in the summer of 2009 and caused the death of 9 Christians, as well as the destruction of churches, homes, and properties. "It is a good sign for bringing the truth into the light and fighting impunity," Fides was told by Francis Mehboob Sada, head of the Christian Study Center in Rawalpindi, an ecumenical center for study and promotion of rights for Christian minorities.

"The culprits remain unpunished. The government had remained silent until now, and again we expressed our disappointment at this. We hope that the new investigations can shed light on serious incidents and bring justice. The false accusations of blasphemy are still doing damage in the country," said Francis Mehboob Sada, in the interview with Fides.

The violence that the police will be called to investigate dates back to summer 2009: on July 30, 2009, in the village of Korian (in Punjab), during a marriage, forty Christian families, accused of violating the law on blasphemy, were attacked by several Islamic militants. Over 57 houses were burned and several of the village's churches were desecrated and destroyed.

On August 1, 2009, in Gojra, an angry mob besieged the residential area and set fire to Christian people and their homes, accusing them of blasphemy. Nine women and children, unable to flee or hide, were burned alive. Those responsible for the crime are part of a militant organization banned by the government. According to local sources of Fides, "circumstantial evidence has highlighted the cover-up role played by the local police."

Another upsetting event has recently taken place in the Christian community in Pakistan. According to local sources of Fides, the Karachi police have arrested five Christians and have investigated about 40 for violence and disorder that occurred recently in Karachi (see Fides 24/2/2010). "It is an ironic accusation," said Fides sources, as "on that occasion, it was the Christian quarter of Pahar Ganj in Karachi that was attacked by a mob of Muslims who wrought havoc in the streets and burned shops." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 8/3/2010)