



ASIA/PAKISTAN - Police release two Christians accused of blasphemy, but the Christian community still lives in fear

Faisalabad (Agenzia Fides) – After suffering from threats and violence in the past few days, Christians in Faisalabad are breathing a sigh of relief: two brothers arrested on charges of blasphemy have been released. Pastor Rashid Emmanuel and his brother Sajid Emmanuel were arrested on 4 July and, after 15 days of detention and hours of questioning, they were released by the police after the charges lodged against the two men were found to be groundless. It was Muslim militants that reported the two Christian men accusing them of distributing leaflets containing blasphemous words against the Prophet Mohammed and promoting a web site with anti-Islam propaganda. Local sources told Fides that police investigations showed the accusations to be false and that not one word against Islam and its Prophet was found in the material distributed. The case of the two brothers provoked violent reaction protests on the part of Islamic militants at Waris pura, one of the largest suburbs of Faisalabad, with a Christian community of 100,000 (see Fides 15/7/2010). Angry demonstrators hurled stones at a local Catholic church, Holy Rosary Church in Waris pura, sparking fear among the locals, many families decided to move away from the area temporarily.

Fides' source in Faisalabad says: "There seem to be more policemen present in the area now and the situation appears to have returned to normal. But people still live in fear in Barakat pura, Waris pura, and other mainly Christian areas. They have vivid memories of the massacre last Summer. Massive attacks on Christian districts, some very serious (in Gojra, Korian, Kasur), when several people died and many were injured. We ask for your prayers for peace in Faisalabad". (PA) (Agenzia Fides 19/7/2010)