



ASIA/PAKISTAN - World Council of Churches: "Repeal the Blasphemy Law"

Islamabad (Agenzia Fides) – It is urgently necessary to repeal the Blasphemy Law in Pakistan which violates civil and religious freedom, the law is “a major source of victimization and persecution of religious minorities”. This was said by the World Council of Churches WCC in a note to Fides. The World Council of Churches has sent an open letter to the President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari, and the Prime Minister Ministro Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, following the murder of two Christian brothers Rashid and Sajid Emmanuel, on 19 July in Faisalabad. In this way the World Council of Churches joins its voice to that of Pakistan civil society, the Catholic Church in Pakistan and many international institutions, religious (such as Aid to the Church in Need), and non (European Parliament resolution on 20 May 2010), calling for the Blasphemy Law in Pakistan to be repealed. The World Council of Churches based in Geneva represents 349 different Christian Churches and communions, for a total 560 million Christians in 110 countries, and operates "in unity of faith, witness and service for a world of justice and peace". This mobilisation is testimony of the support of Christians all over the world for suffering Pakistani Christians.

The Letter, signed by WWC General secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, reads "The introduction of Blasphemy Law in the Pakistan Penal Code - touches upon some of the more sensitive aspects of civil and religious liberty. The Law is also fraught with danger that can be abused by extremist groups when dealing with religious minorities. It has been proven in the past that the charges of Blasphemy law appear to be arbitrarily applied and at times founded on malicious accusations against individuals and groups."

The WCC expresses deep concern and continues “the Blasphemy Law in Pakistan is inimical to and destructive of the harmony and well-being of people who live together in a religiously plural society. The misuse of the Blasphemy Law in Pakistan has led to physical violence, damage, destruction of properties and loss of life within the innocent Christian minority over the years. This is a violation of the fundamental rights guaranteed by Article 36 of the Constitution of Pakistan. ”.

The letter calls for "immediate and necessary actions to bring to justice those who are responsible for the killing of Pastor Rashid Emmanuel and his brother Sajid Emmanuel", and concludes “ We also urge Your Excellency to initiate measures towards the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws and to secure the rights and dignity of all individuals in Pakistan society”. (Agenzia Fides 24/7/2010)