



ASIA/PAKISTAN - Lubna's parents accept one million rupies, case closed

Rawalpindi (Agenzia Fides) – The parents of Lubna Masih, the twelve-year-old Christian girl who was raped and murdered in Rawalpindi by a group of Muslims (see Fides 13/10/2010), accepted a compensation of one million rupees (approximately 11,600 Euros) to abandon the legal proceedings against those responsible for the crime. This is what Fides has learned from the family of the girl, which is now immersed in mourning, sadness, and bewilderment.

After a “struggle” between the Christian organizations that had encouraged the parents to reject any proposed agreement and other envoys and mediators, including several members of Parliament, Saleem and Guddi Masih gave in, accepting the significant cash contribution, which closes the case on a legal status. Saleem, Lubna's father, said: "I forgive the men who killed my daughter. We'll start a new life."

Karman, Saleem's brother, told Fides: "They are upset, but the decision is up to them." Gudde, devastated by the pain cannot utter a word.

“Life for All,” a Christian-based NGO that has fought against impunity and to raise the issue of violence against Christians, told Fides with regret: "If the parents do not even have the strength to defend the memory of their daughter, nobody can do anything."

Carrying out the negotiations was the organization "Ephlal Ministry" ("Justice Service"), specializing in civil and legal mediation. The organization will take 20% of the agreed sum. Among the determining factors were the poverty and hardship of the Masih family. Fides sources point out that "the technique of buying the silence of victims is nothing new and is part of the uneven distribution of forces in the field: Christian families are often the last on the social scale and they are forced to confront members of the Muslim upper middle class or wealthy landowners."

In response to the many cases of violence against Christian girls, last March the President of Pakistan, Ali Zardari, announced the establishment of a "direct telephone line" with a response office, to report the most serious cases of violence against religious minorities. Zardari, in agreement with the minister for religious minorities, Shahbaz Bhatti, had also called for the establishment of an international commission to dialogue with the government and address the most urgent issues. The Christian community had welcomed and supported the project, but currently none of these initiatives has yet come to pass. (PA) (Agenzia Fide 15/10/2010)