



ASIA/PAKISTAN - Bibi Asia: solidarity from Italy and the Philippines

Rome (Agenzia Fides) - The campaign of international solidarity for Bibi Asia continues to grow with new shows from Italy and the Philippines.

Over 100 members of the Italian Parliament from all parties and orientations, have signed a letter, of which a preview was sent to Fides, promoted by the “Association of Parliamentary Friends of Pakistan” and the “Association of Pakistani Christians in Italy”, in which it calls for the release of Asia and for the revision of the blasphemy law.

The document, which will be sent to President Ali Zardari, says: “For some time, the Christians of Pakistan have appealed for concrete measures to guarantee their right to religious freedom and the protection of the rights for minorities, stating the abolition of the law on blasphemy and all discriminatory criminal laws as an absolute necessity.” Christians today represent only 2% of the population in Pakistan - notes the letter - and, despite several limitations, they work in sectors such as education, health care and humanitarian emergencies, and “represent a great resource for the entire society in Pakistan that should be protected and nurtured.”

The letter concludes: “For this, we believe it is essential that religious minorities in Pakistan, and any individual who wishes to freely profess his beliefs, be given this possibility, without being subject to unjust persecution. In that sense, is absolutely necessary to abolish all the rules of the Pakistani Penal Code which, in reality, are a source of torture, fear and continued insecurity to religious minorities. The concession of a pardon to Asia Bibi would be timely and appropriate, who was condemned for expressing her religious affiliation. We also appeal to cancel or change the blasphemy law, which is destroying the harmony and development of Pakistan.”

From the Philippines instead, a pronouncement has been issued - sent to Agenzia Fides – by Interfaith Dialogue Forum in Manila, made up of Muslims and Christians committed to interreligious dialogue and peace. It states: “The conviction of Asia Bibi is sad news for the whole world, as it reminds us that there are people in the world persecuted for their faith, while others carry on unjust proceedings in the name of God We can not close our hearts to the case of Asia Bibi, since Bibi is the victim of an unjust law.” The Forum, expressing “deep concern for the life of our Pakistani sister, Asia Bibi,” asks: “Let us lift our voices around the world for the abolition of the death penalty and we urge the Government to release Asia and repeal the blasphemy law”, in the hope that Christians and Muslims may find a common ground of love for God and love of neighbour.” (PA) (Agenzia Fides 06/12/2010)