



## **ASIA/PAKISTAN-One person arrested for the murder of Shab haz Bhatti; for the Christian community it is "urgent to do justice"**

Karachi (Agenzia Fides) - A man suspected of being involved in the murder of the Minister for Minorities, Shab haz Bhatti, was arrested by the police in Karachi. The man admitted, in a wiretap, that he took part in the plot to eliminate the minister killed on March 2, 2011. The news has revived calls to justice in the Christian community and civil society in Pakistan, which for months have been asking for more commitment regarding the police investigation.

Fr. Yousaf Emmanuel, Director of the National Commission "Justice and Peace" of the Episcopal Conference of Pakistan, commented to Fides: "This country has a serious problem that is called impunity. The citizens are still waiting for clarity about the murder of Benazir Bhutto. And even on those responsible for the murder of Bhatti is pitch black. We ask the government to launch serious investigations and to urgently predispose all possible means. We hope and pray that the culprits are caught as soon as possible, so the family and the Christian community can have justice. "If the extrajudicial killings remain unpunished - adds a source of Fides in civil society - "Democracy in Pakistan remains seriously ill, it is just an empty word. It is a crucial issue for the rule of law ", remembering the recent murder of the Pakistani journalist Syed Saleem Shazad.

According to preliminary reports, Shab haz Bhatti was killed by a terrorist group linked to the Taliban group "Tehrik-e-Taliban". The Minister of the Interior Rehman Malik had assured the minorities on the commitment in the investigation to hunt down the culprits. Religious minorities in Pakistan had asked the government to establish an independent commission of inquiry, led by one of the judges of the Supreme Court, but the request fell on deaf ears.

Meanwhile the situation in the country's Federal Ministry for Minorities remains uncertain, mainly because of political games related to the appointment of federal ministers. Paul Bhatti, brother of the Minister killed, was appointed "Special Advisor" of the Prime Minister of Minorities Affairs, and the Catholic Akram Gill appointed "Minister of state" (a kind of vice-minister), but neither has the title of "federal minister". The ministry was renamed "Ministry of Harmony and Minorities", but in the Finance Act, presented by the government in recent weeks, it had no mention or recognition of a budget to use. As sources of Fides in Pakistani politics refer, in recent days rumors about its possible abolition have been circulating. For this, a delegation of parliamentarians and Christian leaders have sent an appeal to Prime Minister Raza Gilani, calling for the Ministry to be kept alive and that dignity and strength are given back. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 16/06/2011)