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ASIA/PAKISTAN - The Bishop of Islamabad: Blasphemy is a "constitutional defect", Asia Bibi must be saved

Islamabad (Agenzia Fides) - As protests, and the maneuvers of the radical Islamic groups in favor of Mumtaz Qadri - government of Punjab's murderer, guilty for having defended Asia Bibi and questioned the blasphemy law continue - Bishops and religious Islamic leaders claim legality, rule of law, secular state, respect for justice, in a delicate political moment for the country, marked by government crisis and social instability. And are joined by the "Masihi Foundation" in a heartfelt plea to save Asia Bibi's life, a Christian woman sentenced to death for blasphemy (see Fides 4/10/2011).
His Exc. Mgr. Rufin Anthony, Bishop of Islamabad-Rawalpindi, told Fides that we must "keep the tiller starboard": "As Mumtaz Qadri's case clearly demonstrates, state and religion should be separated. Who defends Qadri clings to the existing defects in the Pakistani Constitution, which is based on a specific religion and admits the blasphemy law. I think death sentence is not something to celebrate. But at this juncture, supporting the Masihi Foundation, I would like to mention Asia Bibi's case, a Christian woman unjustly condemned for blasphemy. It is important that in the country the rule of law prevails, to build a tolerant society".
Mgr. Ijaz Inayat agrees, the Bishop of Protestant denomination "Church of Pakistan". In an interview with Fides, the Archbishop notes that "these urgent issues must be addressed in the 'Conference of all parties', just convened by the government". "We are saddened - he continued - by the fact that extremist groups have praised a murder committed for religious reasons. The extremists are destroying human values and guiding society towards madness. Salman Taseer's son, who was kidnapped in Lahore, will be used as bargaining chips to secure Qadri's release. We condemn the extremist ideology, brought into the state system by the dictator Zia Ul Haq. Also according to the Islamic faith, Mumtaz Qadri had an "Ameen" (a responsibility), being the bodyguard of the governor, but he broke the trust with deceit. Where is this allowed in Islam? ".
Maulana Mehfooz Ali Khan, a Muslim leader in Islamabad, who joined the appeal of the "Masihi Foundation" emphasizes "the sanctity of human life", which applies to Salman Tasser, Mumtaz Qadri, and Asia Bibi. Recalling that "killing is condemned in every religion", said the Muslim leader: "I am happy to note that there are healthy rumors in the Pakistani society which defend these values". Among the signatories of the appeal, the Muslim scholar Hussain Ahmed Malik, from Islamabad, agrees with the "spreading of a very positive message, based on respect for human values, rights, justice".
Among the leaders of the associations who adhere to the appeal, Alex Baxter of "Breaking Bonds" Christian-based NGO, aims to "raise voice against injustice and work for a tolerant society, in order to spread peace and equality, that the Creator has taught us". Rizwan Paul, president of the NGO "Life for All", reaffirms "the commitment to the promotion of life and social harmony in the country". (PA) (Agenzia Fides 05/10/2011)

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