



ASIA/PAKISTAN - Every year, one thousand girls from religious minorities are kidnapped, raped and converted to Islam

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) - About 1,000 Christian and Hindu girls are kidnapped and raped by Muslim radicals, forced to Islamic marriage, sometimes killed in Pakistan every year: Fides sources in the Catholic Church and civil society of Pakistan, as for example the "Human Rights Commission of Pakistan" depict a gloomy toll. Religious minorities, explain sources of Fides, "are not guaranteed justice by the courts: it is a serious loophole in the rule of law, and this is a major cause of suffering and persecution". In addition, women in Pakistan live in a position of inferiority: only 8% of women receive education and female fetuses are often aborted. Christian women have, in addition, the stigma of belonging to a religious minority: they are the weakest and most vulnerable. They face abuse but must remain in silence, otherwise there is a risk of further violence against their family.

Among the recent cases reported by Fides, all occurred in Punjab, we have the case of Farah Hatim, a Catholic girl kidnapped and forced to marry a Muslim man in the city of Rahim Yar Khan in southern Punjab (see Fides 25/6/2011) for whom some Christian NGOs have requested the intervention of the UN Commission on Human Rights.

In May 2011, Rebecca Masih and Masih Saima, two Christian girls were kidnapped by a group of Muslims and forced to convert to Islam, in the district of Jhung, an area of Faisalabad. Sidra Bibi, a 14-year-old Christian in the district of Sheikhpura, was abused physically and psychologically, she became pregnant. She managed to escape from her tormentor, she is back home, in a state of prostration, with her family. Police have refused to accept her complaint. Two other Christian girls, Uzma Bibi, 15 years old, from Gulberg, and Saira Bibi, 20 years old, a nurse in Lahore, were taken by force from Muslim neighbors, converted to Islam and forced to marry with Islamic rites. In 2010, Fides reported the story of Kiran Nayyaz, a 13-year-old Catholic girl from Faisalabad: she became pregnant after being sexually abused, she gave birth to a malformed baby. Shazia Bashir, a 12-year-old Christian girl, was raped and murdered in January 2010. Chaudhry Naeem, the rich Muslim lawyer, responsible for the crime, was acquitted. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 11/10/2011)