



## **ASIA/PAKISTAN - Censorship in the name of "Jesus Christ": it is forbidden to write it in text message, the Church protests**

Islamabad (Agenzia Fides) - In Pakistan, it is forbidden to write the name "Jesus Christ" in SMS text messages, sent via mobile phones. This was established by the Telecommunications Authority in Pakistan in a measure that orders mobile phone companies to block text messages with certain words considered vulgar, obscene or harmful. Among more than 1,600 banned words, reports a local source to Fides, there are also the words "Jesus Christ" and "Satan". The companies have seven days to give effect to the regulation, but the Christian Churches and organizations for human rights in Pakistan announce battle.

Fr. John Shakir Nadeem, Secretary of the "Commission for Social Communications" of the Episcopal Conference, announces to Fides: "The Catholic Church of Pakistan will make all necessary pressures on the government to eliminate the name of Christ from the prohibited list. We understand the desire to protect the minds of young people, indicating a list of obscene words. But why include the name of Christ? What is obscene? Banning it is a violation of our right to evangelize and hurts the feelings of Christians. If the ban is confirmed, it would be a black page for the country, a further act of discrimination against Christians and an open violation of Pakistan's Constitution. We hope that the government will make the appropriate corrections".

Organizations for the defense of human rights and freedom of citizens such as "Bytes For All" have announced that they will contest the order in court, saying it "violates the right to freedom of speech and expression", "it is an intrusion into the citizens privacy", and it is "not only oppressive and hegemonic, but also unconstitutional". The Telecommunications Authority said that the freedom of Pakistanis is "subject to the limitations provided by the law, in the interest of the glory of Islam". The list contains over 1,600 words most commonly considered vulgar, others of sexual nature. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 21/11/2011)