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ASIA/PAKISTAN- Cecil Chaudhry has died, a Catholic national hero, Shahbaz Bhatti's teacher, an opponent of "blasphemy"

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) - Pakistan has lost its "national hero": Cecil Chaudhry died last night in Lahore, at the age of 72, a former captain of the armed forces, a fervent Catholic, committed to human rights and education. Chaudhry died of an incurable disease in hospital, with the comfort of his loved ones (he leaves four children) and friends and leaders of the Catholic Church in Pakistan. In the last hours of his life His Exc. Mgr. Sebastian Shaw, Apostolic Administrator of Lahore, His Exc. Mgr. Joseph Coutts, Archbishop of Karachi and President of the Episcopal Conference, Fr. Yousaf Emmanuel, Director of the Justice and Peace Commission in Episcopal Conference, with whom Chaudhry had collaborated, Paul Bhatti, Federal Minister for National Harmony were present.
Chaudhry served the nation as a talented aviation pilot in the two wars between India and Pakistan (in 1965 and 1971), distinguishing himself for acts of heroism. He was awarded many times and was an excellent teacher, after retirement he devoted himself entirely to the service to the Church, especially in the educational field: he became the first dean of St. Anthony College in Lahore, then St. Mary's College in Rawalpindi, he was appreciated as a Director , teacher, manager, man of faith and culture, integrity and for his open-mindedness. Among his students and, as he loved to say, "among his creatures" there was Shahbaz Bhatti, the Catholic minister killed, so he was an invaluable advisor. At the service of formation, he joined the effort to protect human rights, openly declaring himself against the blasphemy law and supporting the Commission "Justice and Peace" in the campaign for its abolition. Speaking to Fides, Fr. Yousaf Emmanuel, Director of the Commission remembers him as "a great man, a model for his loyalty to the nation and the Church." Archbishop Coutts told Fides: "It is a great loss: he was a man respected and loved by everyone who, as a Catholic citizen, gave a very high contribution to Pakistan, showing that Christians can and want to be for the country" The funeral will take place tomorrow, April 15, in Lahore in the presence of the highest civil and religious authorities of the nation. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 14/4/2012)

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