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ASIA/PAKISTAN - Violence against Christians after the blasphemy film on Mohammed: a Bishop injured

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) - Christians in Pakistan are the target of violence on behalf of Islamic extremists who pour out on them feelings of anger and revenge after the release of the movie "The Innocence of Muslims," blasphemous towards the prophet Mohammed. After the attack on the Christian church of "St. Paul" in Mardan, a Bishop was attacked, beaten and wounded. As reported by local sources of Fides, the Protestant Bishop Naeem Samuel, of the "Trinity Evangelical Church Prayer", was attacked yesterday, as he was leaving the church in Youhanaabad, a suburb of Lahore (Punjab province), where about 10 thousand Christian families live.
Three men stopped him and started insulting him with phrases like: "You Christians have offended our Prophet, we will kill you all!" Although the Bishop tried to defend himself, saying that "all Christians in Pakistan have condemned the film", the three began to hit him with violence, leaving him on the ground and unconscious. The Bishop, who is the Rector of the "Trinity Biblical University," has many wounds and fractures and needed hospital treatment. Mgr. Samuel also runs a Christian television cable network in Lahore, which broadcasts Bible courses, religious films and prayers. This is why he had received threats and the injunction to stop the broadcast, and about a month ago his house was set on fire.
In the meantime, the trail of violence in the Christian area of Essa Nagri, in the metropolis of Karachi (Sindh province) continues: The last victim is the 30 year old Christian Zulifiqar Masih, who was killed in a raid carried out by Islamic extremists of ethnic Pashtun. He is the fifth Christian killed in a month: on 29 August Fasil Masih was shot dead; on 12September Yousaf Masih, on 15 September Rafi Masih and Nasir Masih (see Fides 17/09/2012).
Violence also affects young Christians, the most vulnerable: as reported to Fides by the NGO "World Vision in Progress", in past days Sumbal Masih, a 16 year old Christian Faisalabad (in Punjab), a waitress, was kidnapped, raped and tortured for six hours by her employer, a wealthy Muslim, and by two other men. Two of the perpetrators were arrested by the local police. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 29/09/2012)

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