



ASIA/PAKISTAN - Paul Bhatti: "Rimsha towards acquittal"

Islamabad (Agenzia Fides) - Masih Rimsha's prosecutors - the Christian girl arrested for blasphemy and then released on bail - are carrying out an "obstructive tactic, with the sole purpose to drag out the case and prevent complete resolution "This is what Paul Bhatti, leader of the " All Pakistan Minorities Alliance" and Minister for National Harmony explains to Fides Agency, referring to the child's case, so the Islamabad High Court has postponed the trial to 17 October, because of the prosecutors absence (for health reasons). The strategy of the prosecution, said Bhatti, is doomed to failure, given that "the case is in the hands of the High Court, and the evidence presented by the defense is overwhelming." Rimsha then proceeds "quickly towards acquittal" and "nothing can be worth the recantation of witnesses who accused the Imam Khalid Jadoon Chishti of having orchestrated the case." In fact, their statements were registered under Section n. 164 of the Penal Code of Pakistan. This means that the court submitted the document to the witness three times, asking for confirmation, and making sure that there were no constraints whatsoever. After this procedure, the statements are deemed conclusive, and the recantation, according to law, is inadmissible. The 15 day postponement of the hearing, informs Bhatti, was caused only by the temporary absence of the judge. If all goes well, "the full acquittal may already take place on October 17": Bhatti is optimistic.

Speaking to Fides, he also criticizes the attitude of some Pakistani Christian NGOs that continue to spread Rimsha family's appeals and pretend to handle the case, "solely for commercial purposes and to speculate, attracting Western benefactors." The Minister recalls that Rimsha and her family are in a safe place, under the tutelage of the "All Pakistan Minorities Alliance" and that no NGOs have direct contact with them. Also the protest organized against Bhatti in Islamabad in past days was "fictitious and spurious" according to the Minister, the displaced families in the neighborhood of Mehrabadi, where Rimsha's family lived, "were not present, as one wants people to believe." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 02/10/2012)