



AFRICA/EGYPT - Two Copt children arrested for insulting the Koran: a "Rimsha case " in Egypt?

Cairo (Agenzia Fides) - The arrest of two Coptic Orthodox children accused of urinating on the pages of the Koran is just the latest manifestation of a "growing hatred toward Egyptian Christians that is expressed in many ways." This is explained to Fides by His Exc. Mgr. Botros Fahim Awad Hanna, Auxiliary Bishop of Alexandria of the Catholic Copts.

The case which sees two children - one nine and the other ten - occurred in the village of Ezbet Marco, in the southern province of Beni Suef. In fomenting collective anger against the two boys is the sheikh Gamal Shamadai, known for his extremist positions. He re-launched rumors that some neighbors saw the two minors urinate on some pages of the sacred book of Islam. The two boys were conducted by security forces in a juvenile prison also to be taken away from the rage of mobs that the news of their arrest had surrounded the local police station.

The very wording of the complaint regarding the two boys contains, according to Bishop Fahim, controversial elements: "Here in Egypt, the accusation of having destroyed the Gospel and of having urinated on its torn pages is at the center of the investigation concerning a Salafi sheikh, who carried out this sacrilegious act in the days when the Muslim anger exploded for the famous offensive movie against Mohammed produced in the U.S.A. Now, the very same accusation is reversed on two Copt boys. I hope that investigations are carried out correctly, avoiding not to take as evidence the rumors that have circulated. "

That of the Salafist sheikh investigated for contempt of the Gospel is a rare case of a process initiated for offenses directed against the Christian faith. "The authorities - says Bishop Fahim - in that case could not turn a blind eye: the sacrilegious act had provoked more than thirty complaints." Among the 17 cases of prosecutions for offenses against religion, the vast majority came from the accusations against the Coptic Christians, with a worrying surge in recent weeks. "Often - Bishop Fahim tells Fides - to be accused of some offense to Islam, it is enough to criticize the behavior of fundamentalists written in messages of their Facebook page. For decades, the loudspeakers of some mosques hear insults against Christians, accused of being atheists. Now it happens that some boy, disappointed by what has been said about the Arab 'Revolution', really believes that he has acquired all freedoms. They write without thinking on some social network, and this is enough to be arrested, imprisoned and condemned." (GV) (Agenzia Fides 04/10/2012).