



AFRICA/EGYPT - The two Coptic children accused of insulting Islam have been released; "decisive" intervention attributed to President Morsi

Cairo (Agenzia Fides) - The Egyptian Prosecutor General ordered yesterday afternoon, October 4, the release of the two Coptic Orthodox children who had been taken the previous day to a juvenile detention after being accused of urinating on some pages containing the verses of the Koran, in a village in the southern province of Beni Suef (see Fides 04/10/2012). The court case has not yet been formally filed. But sources of the Coptic Orthodox community – such as the lawyer Naguib Gebrail – say that the rapid release of the two boys was facilitated by a direct intervention of the President of Egypt, the Islamist Mohamed Morsi, at the urging of his Coptic Orthodox assistant Samir Marcos.

Formally, the detention of the two children did not appear to comply with international conventions on children's rights signed by Egypt. In fact, the children Nabil Nagui Rizq (10 years old) and Mina Nadi Farag (9 years old) were placed in detention by security forces also to be withdrawn from the anger of the mob who, incited also by a sheikh of the village, had surrounded the local police station to the news of their custody.

"The release of the two boys is good news, but the Egyptian media have not put a strong emphasis on the case," said to Fides Botros Fahim Awad Hanna, Auxiliary Bishop of Alexandria of the Catholic Copts. Inattention on behalf of the media that, according to the Coptic Bishop, is not accidental: "often, allegations of offense against Islam always triggers an uproar, with great mobilization of groups that blow on fire. When, at times, these allegations deflate, the accused persons are released on the sly, and no one knows anything."

The charges of insulting Islam addressed in particular to the Copts in Egypt have increased after the story of the movie against Mohammed aired on YouTube in recent weeks which sparked riots and violence in many Muslim majority Countries. A story that Bishop Fahim is still full of mystery. "Behind that movie," said the Bishop to Fides, "there was a political game. We have yet to understand who did it, who financed it, who put it online, and what purpose one wanted to obtain with that operation." (GV) (Agenzia Fides 05/10/2012).