



ASIA/PAKISTAN - Christian boy accused of blasphemy for an sms; bail to the imam who framed Rimsha

Karachi (Agenzia Fides) - Protests, threats and an attempt to "rough justice" against a Christian teenager, accused of having sent some Muslims peers a blasphemous text message: This is what occurred in the district of Gulshan-i-Iqbal, in the bourgeois area of Karachi, a city in the south of Pakistan. As reported to Fides by the local NGO "World Vision in Progress", the home of the boy's family was ransacked and set on fire last night after a violent protest by Islamic fundamentalists. The boy, 15 year old Ryan Brian Patus and his family were rescued by the NGO. Have escaped the murderous rage because, at the time of the attack, Ryan was in the hospital to assist his father, seriously ill, and his family, fearing reprisals, had preferred to abandon the house. The police intervened on the spot, said the boy is accused of sending a blasphemous text message that began to circulate among the residents of the area, triggering reactions. Ryan claims to have received and forwarded the text message to his friends without reading it carefully. He has been accused by two witnesses and the Imam Qari Ghulam Qadir, of the the Jamia mosque, who registered a First Information Report (formal complaint) for breach of Article 295c of the Penal Code (insulting the Prophet Mohammed).

The Anglican Bishop of Karachi, Mgr. Ijaz Inayat, of the "Church of Pakistan", said he was "appalled by the story and deeply concerned about the safety of the family." In a message sent to Fides, the Pakistani NGO "Human Rights Commission of Pakistan," reports that in 2012 in Pakistan 22 official cases of blasphemy have been recorded, all controversial, including that of Rimsha Masih, a Christian girl falsely accused by Imam Khalid Jadoon Chisti. Yesterday the religious leader Chisti, accused of burning pages of the Quran in order to frame Rimsha, was granted a bail of 200 thousand rupees (about 1600 euro) by a court of first instance in Islamabad. According to his lawyer, since all the witnesses who had testified against Chisti have retracted, the imam should be acquitted for lack of evidence. Rimsha Masih's lawyers, currently free on bail, tell Fides that the statements on behalf of the witnesses were formalized by the court under Art. 164 of the Penal Code (which includes three confirmations) and are considered indisputable: in this case the withdrawal is unacceptable. The hearing for Rimsha's case, and possible full acquittal, is expected to be on October 17. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 12/10/2012)