



ASIA/PAKISTAN - Rimsha's case: postponed for a month, Ryan's case: blasphemous SMS sent by Muslims?

Islamabad (Agenzia Fides) - Two cases of young Christians accused of blasphemy continue to hold the Christian community's breath in Pakistan. We are talking about Rimsha Masih, a 12-year-old falsely accused by an imam in Rawalpindi, arrested and released on bail, and Ryan Brian Patras, a 14-year-old from Karachi, accused of having sent a blasphemous SMS. The boy, officially reported, is now in a hidden place with his family.

Today, sources of Fides report, the High Court in Islamabad, in a quick hearing, has postponed to November 14 the ruling on Rimsha's case. The Court must decide on the cancellation of the complaint (First Information Report) registered against the girl. The cancellation requested by the defense, would lead to full acquittal for Rimsha. The request is based on statements made by three Muslim witnesses who accuse the Imam Khalid Jadoon Chisti, indicating him as the man who made up the evidence against Rimsha. Imam Chisti's defense - note sources of Fides - is trying to remove the charges, making the three witnesses recant, and has adopted a strategy to delay the trial.

In the case of Ryan Brian Patras, his family, after their house was devastated and burned by Islamic radicals (see Fides 12/10/2012) have moved to a safe place, and have asked for the legal aid of a lawyer and Pastor Mustaq Gill. The Patras family is a Christian family who lived in the middle-class residential area Gulshan-i-Iqbal Karachi, the only Christian family in a Muslim area. According to Fides sources in the Patras family, Ryan's cell phone was used by some of his Muslim friends who sent the SMS blasphemous to damage him. Ryan, at first, said he did not notice that he had sent the SMS or read it carefully. But rebuilding better the story, the boy said that some friends had asked to borrow his mobile for a few minutes. In this case, Ryan would be entirely unconnected with the facts and the victim of a plot. Lawyer Gill, interviewed by Fides, notes "a very dangerous trend, in which Christians are targeted, through the blasphemy law, because of their faith." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 17/10/2012)