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ASIA/PAKISTAN - Rimsha acquitted, historic verdict: Now a "Mixed Commission" for cases of blasphemy is needed

Islamabad (Agenzia Fides) - Rimsha Masih has been acquitted, a Christian girl mentally disabled, falsely accused of blasphemy, who was arrested on August 16 and then released on bail on September 8. The Chief Judge of the High Court of Islmabad, Iqbal Hameedur Rehman, issued this morning, the full verdict of acquittal, stating "dismissed" the complaint (First Information Report) that contained the charges against the girl. The judge had reserved his decision after the hearing on 14 November, when the parties had submitted the conclusions of the hearing stage of the trial.
This morning the judge, before the lawyers of the parties, read the decision, but the written judgment has yet to be published. The Court accepted the argument of the defense, based on statements made by three witnesses who accuse the Muslim Imam Khalid Jadoon Chishti, indicating him as the man who fabricated evidence to frame Rimsha. The prosecutor tried to remove the charges, making the three witnesses recant, adopting an "obstructionist" strategy to defer to the maximum the trial time. But this strategy failed.
At the head of Rimsha’s defense team was the Muslim lawyer Rana Hamid, who expressed his satisfaction and received congratulations from everyone. The Catholic lawyer Tahir Naveed Chaudhry was also part of the college, who told Fides: "The court recognized Rimsha’s innocence and the plot against her. It is the first time in the history of Pakistan that a prosecution process for blasphemy ends in this way. This ruling will set a precedent and will be very useful for the future but also for other cases of blasphemy present today in the courts. "
The lawyer immediately announced the news to Rimsha’s family, currently in a secret place, who expressed "happiness and emotion for the end of the ordeal."
The "All Pakistan Minorities Alliance", an NGO led by the Catholic minister Paul Bhatti, who followed Rimsha’s case, now relaunches the proposal to form a "Mixed Commission", with Christian leaders, experts, lawyers and Muslim leaders who can examine in advance cases of alleged blasphemy. The aim is to prevent painful events to be repeated, so that no one is able to abuse of the blasphemy law, hitting the innocent of any religion. (PA)
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