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ASIA/PAKISTAN - The Bishops: "The solution to Rimsha's case is a contribution to peace and harmony"

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) - "The outcome of Rimsha Masih's case, a Christian girl acquitted on false charges of blasphemy, will be a contribution to peace, justice and interfaith harmony in Pakistan," says to Fides Agency Fr. Yousaf Emmanuel, Director of the "Justice and Peace" Commission of the Episcopal Conference of Pakistan. The Commission monitors all cases of blasphemy in the country and provides updated data to Fides: in 2011 161 people were indicted and 9 killed in extrajudicial executions, victims of the blasphemy law, composed by the articles 295b and 295c (insulting the Koran or Prophet Mohammed) of the Penal Code of Pakistan. In addition, the "Human Rights Monitor 2011", the annual report edited by the Commission, announces that between 1986 (when the law came into effect) and 2010, 1081 were accused of blasphemy: among them 138 Christians, 468 Muslims, 454 Ahmadis, 21 Hindus.
The Director of the Commission, speaking on behalf of the Pakistan Episcopate, remarked to Fides: "Today is a great day not only for Christians, but for the whole country. Rimsha's defense had solid arguments and the court decided in her favor. We are happy as Catholics, but I am happy that many Muslims have shared with us this battle for justice." Rimsha's case, in fact, notes Fr. Emmanuel, "has in fact strengthened interfaith dialogue in Pakistan: in every meeting, in every debate, Christians and Muslims have found themselves on the same side, in line to defend the same values of civilization, truth, legality and justice. They condemned together the abuses of the blasphemy law, which, it should be stressed, currently affects the majority of Muslim citizens.
This case has increased inter-religious harmony and will serve as an example with regards to the approach to follow to solve all the other problems that the nation faces." The Director indicates the "lesson" of the story of Rimsha: "Rimsha's case teaches us that, as Christians and Muslims we are called to work together in respect and cordiality, to counter the fundamentalists and extremists who intend to break harmony and trigger conflicts in society. On our behalf, we believe this is the approach of the Gospel: stand in front of our brother and sister in a spirit of kindness and love. " (PA) (Agenzia Fides 20/11/2012)

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