



ASIA/PAKISTAN - Over 200 Shiite Muslims accused of "blasphemy"

Multan (Agenzia Fides) - An official complaint with the prosecution for blasphemy was presented to the police in Multan (in Punjab) against 222 Shiite Muslims, of whom 72 identified and 150 unidentified. The complaint was filed by Sunni groups after a brawl which took place in Multan yesterday, following the religious procession of the Shiite, who celebrated the "Ashura" holidays that commemorates the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, grandson of the Prophet Mohammed. As reported to Fides, the clashes began when some militant Sunni extremist organization, "Sipah-i-Sahaba," tried to block or divert the procession of Shiite worshipers, saying that part of the journey was not authorized.

The outcome of the clashes between Shiites and Sunnis: 10 injured and 222 complaints. It seems that the Shiite threw stones at the flags and banners where the name of the Prophet Mohammed was written and are therefore guilty of blasphemy. Shiite leaders such as Fazal Shah and Ali Hussain Shah denied any wrongdoing, saying that no one threw stones at the flags, nor insulted the Prophet.

Local sources of Fides note that, as in many other cases, the accusations of blasphemy are instrumental and affect not only minorities but also Muslim citizens, helping to undermine social and religious harmony.

"The abuse of the law continues to cause discord and fuels sectarianism in the Pakistani society," remarked to Fides Agency Prof. Mobeen Shahid, a Pakistani, an expert on issues related to blasphemy. Prof. Mobeen Shahid, a professor of "Thought and Islamic religion," at the Pontifical Lateran University, is the author of a study, soon to be published, entitled "The blasphemy law and the case of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan", organized together with N. Daniel, for the Institute of Political Studies S. Pius V, which will be presented to the European Parliament and the office of the United Nations in Geneva.

According to prof. Mobeen, "the cancellation of the laws of blasphemy in Pakistan is possible if the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights of Islam." This is why "popular consensus and discussion in the National Parliament is needed." Popular consensus is possible only if one gives birth to a system of education,

"which reflects and incorporates both the Declarations for Human Rights": This approach would allow a possible radical change of society, and could have the effect of the abolition of the blasphemy laws." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 28/11/2012)