



## **ASIA/PAKISTAN - Accusations of blasphemy in a Christian school; a young Muslim man died in prison**

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) - The controversial blasphemy law continues to claim victims among Christians and Muslims. A Muslim mob threatened and attacked a Christian school against false charges of blasphemy, the "Community Education Centre" in Azad Town, near Lahore (in Punjab), which offers free education to children, mostly Muslims who come from poor and needy families. As reported to Fides Agency by the NGO "World Vision in Progress" on 1 December, the imam of Azad Town announced from his mosque that the staff of the Christian school had torn pages of the Quran, information he received in an anonymous phone call. Immediately hundreds of Islamic militants gathered outside the main gate of the school and started yelling, throwing objects at the building, then forcing an employee to hand them the keys of the institute. A raid and pillage were avoided only thanks to the prompt intervention of the police who dispersed the crowd. The lawyers of the team of "World Vision in Progress" reported to the police a hostile act and an attempt to discredit the school, according to the Muslim children's parents, "they have never tried to teach anything against Islam."

Another case was reported to Fides Agency by the Christian lawyer Mushtaq Gill, leader of the "Legal Evangelical Association Development" (LEAD). The young Muslim Nadeem, 22, accused of blasphemy in recent days, had been imprisoned by the police in Nankana Sahab (always in Punjab) based on allegations of another Muslim. Against him an official complaint (First Information Report) had not yet been formalized, while some local ulema claimed his innocence, talking about "false accusations". Yesterday, the young man who was under police custody, died suddenly. According to the lawyer Mushtaq Gill, who had taken his defense, the death may be the result of ill-treatment and beatings, "Nadeem – he refers to Fides - was fine when he was arrested. The officials said he began to vomit, they took him to the hospital where his death was ascertained. We will ask for an autopsy." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 03/12/2012)