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ASIA/PAKISTAN - Rimsha Masih's case reaches the Supreme Court

Islamabad (Agenzia Fides) - Rimsha Masih’s ordeal has not finished yet, a Christian girl accused of blasphemy, mentally disabled, arrested and then acquitted by the High Court in Islamabad (see Fides 20/11/2012). The legal process of her case is not over: the prosecutors, as they had anticipated, have presented an appeal to the Supreme Court in Islamabad, the third and final level of judgment, and today, January 15, the first hearing will be held. As reported to Fides Agency by the NGO of Christian inspiration "Lead" ("Legal Evangelical Association Development"), Rimsha’s family is still hidden in a safe place, and among the Christian community "a feeling of fear comes back to surface" . Meanwhile, because of the lack of security, dozens of very poor Christian families, in the district of Mehrabadi, in Islamabad, where Rimsha’s family lived, have not yet returned to their homes. The families were forced to escape due to the threats of extremists, linked to Rimsha’s case.
After the international uprising and after the court had established the false accusations that had framed Rimsha, the case of the Christian girl seemed exemplary to show public opinion the abuse of the law of blasphemy and had seen, in this work, the contribution of many Muslim leaders and intellectuals. According to Fides sources, the appeal to the Supreme Court may have been made for purely political reasons, under pressure from fundamentalist groups, in view of the parliamentary elections to be held next March.
Fr. Mario Rodrigues, Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in Pakistan, explains to Fides: "On the one hand there is the political manipulation of Rimsha’s case; on the other hand there are some mullahs who insist and, moreover, there is a right to lodge an appeal. We are confident in the justice in Pakistan: I am sure the Supreme Court will confirm Rimsha’s acquittal." Fr. Rodrigues notes that "the abuse of the blasphemy law, such as Rimsha’s case continues to perpetuate, while the country is crossed by a worrying spiral of violence." (PA)
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