



ASIA/PAKISTAN - Christian minor raped and tortured by Muslims

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) - A Christian minor girl was kidnapped, raped and tortured by two influential Muslims. Fouzia Bibi, 15 years old, and a resident of the village of Roday, near Kasur (in Punjab), comes from a very poor family, and works as a farm laborer with her father, Malooka Masih, and with her brothers., On 25 January Fouzia Bibi had gone to do a commission, on behalf of the owner of the company, in a nearby location. On the way back two Muslims armed with pistols, Sher Muhammad and Shabir Ali, influential people of the territory, kidnapped and, imprisoned her in a room, raped and tortured her repeatedly. The girl was then left unconscious in the street. She was able to return home, Fouzia's family went to the police station to file for a complaint. Due to the police's refusal not to listen to what had happened, Fouzia's father turned to Rev. Saleem Gill of the "Church of Pakistan" (Anglican) and Bishop Irfan Jamil, who sought proper legal assistance.

Even the NGO LEAD (Legal Evangelical Association Development ") has been involved which is dedicated to promoting social commitment of Christians in Pakistan. Four days later, with the help of the NGO, First Information Report was presented against the rapists. Malooka Masih said that the perpetrators also threatened her family to avoid protruding complaint. Fouzia's family is now "terrified and under threat," says to Fides the LEAD. The NGO notes that Christians are often victims of abuse by powerful Muslims, who deny them any dignity or human rights. In particular, Christian girls are doubly discriminated against and often treated "as goods." According to data Fides collected, each year there are approximately 700 cases of girls belonging to religious minorities (Christians or Hindus) who are raped or kidnapped, even for the purpose of conversion. Lawyer Sardar Mushtaq Gill, head of LEAD, strongly condemns the rapists, asking the government to "take strong measures to eliminate such phenomena of society." To combat such practices and to contribute to the law, Paul Bhatti, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister for National Harmony and President of the "All Pakistan Minorities Alliance" (APMA), today announced the creation of a special legal team of APMA that brings together leading jurists of different faiths, which will provide free legal assistance to people in need. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 04/02/2013)