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ASIA/PAKISTAN - A Christian Pastor released, who was arrested for alleged blasphemy

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) - The Christian Protestant Pastor Karma Patras, 55 years old, arrested in October 2012 on false charges of blasphemy, was released on bail after his accuser admitted he accused him "incorrectly". As learned by Fides, the Pastor, released from prison on February 28, leads a Christian community in the city of Sanghla Hill, in the province of Punjab.
During a worship assembly in the house of one of the faithful, at the request of one of those present, the Pastor attempted to explain the Islamic Feast of Sacrifice (Eid-ul-Adha) celebrated by Muslims, citing some biblical passages. According to the local faithful, some Muslim neighbors heard the speech and accused the Pastor of blasphemy, referring everything to the imam of the nearby mosque. From the loudspeakers of the mosque one could hear the appeal "to punish Pastor Karma Patras, who is a blasphemer and infidel." Hundreds of Muslims reached the Pastor, beating him and his family up. Only the intervention of the police, who arrested Patras, saved them from lynching. In court, in past days, the main accuser, the Muslim Syed Zulqernain Shah, told the court that he falsely accused the Pastor and had no objections to his release.
Sangla Hill in recent years has been the scene of numerous attacks by radical Islamists against churches, homes and other Christian institutions, after the case of an alleged "desecration of the Koran" by the young Christian Yousaf Masih in 2005. Then more than 2,000 angry Muslims attacked churches, while Yousaf Masih, who was arrested for blasphemy, was later tried and acquitted. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 06/03/2013)

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