



## **ASIA/PAKISTAN - Commission "Justice and Peace": "Government and police are the perpetrators of violence against Christians"**

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) - "Government and police are the perpetrators of violence against Christians": This is what the Commission "Justice and Peace" of Catholic Pakistani Bishops strongly says, speaking after the serious attack against the "Joseph Colony " in Lahore, in which 178 Christian homes were destroyed. In a statement sent to Fides, the Commission urges the Government of Punjab "to adopt long-term measures to control abuse of the blasphemy law."

Fr. Emmanuel Yousaf, Director of the Commission, and Peter Jacob, Executive Director, define "the police and the administration the main responsables of the situation, that allowed the development of a tragedy in the heart of the city." The provincial government is responsible - because it "ignored the situation of minorities and the growing religious intolerance fomented by extremist groups." In addition, "attention was not paid to the recommendations expressed by the judicial investigation conducted after the events in Gojra in 2009, when six Christians were burned alive and 140 houses of the faithful were set on fire." If the provincial and federal governments "had introduced legal safeguards and administrative reforms, the tragedy on Saturday could have been avoided," the text says. The statement calls for "a credible and impartial investigation", "punishment of the guilty" and "adequate compensation to about 200 families affected."

The Commission also notes, "the recording of a false blasphemy case against the Christian Sawan Masih ": this is why it requests that the complaint of blasphemy against the innocent is immediately revoked and that the young person is released. The abuse of the blasphemy law is widespread in Punjab and covers about 80% of cases reported in the province. The statement calls on the Government of Punjab "to accept the challenge of a legal and administrative reform to prevent abuse in cases of blasphemy." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 11/03/2013)