



ASIA/PAKISTAN - A Catholic student killed in the village of Kushpur

Faisalabad (Agenzia Fides) - A premeditated attack, a young Catholic student was killed and two people were wounded: is the toll of the attack which took place in the village of Kushpur, in the district of Faisalabad, in the Province of Punjab. Kushpur (in Urdu means "land of happiness") is the village famous for being "the beating heart of the Pakistani Catholics": it is inhabited by Christians and gave birth to men like Shahbaz Bhatti (the Christian minister killed two years ago), as well as numerous bishops and priests.

According to what was said to Fides by Fr. Khalid Rashid, General Vicar of the Diocese of Faisalabad, the murder, which occurred on 17 May, was motivated by the dispute over a piece of land that some Christian inhabitants of Khushpur sold to a Muslim family. In the punitive expedition a 14-year-old Catholic Faisal Patras was killed, while his brother Danish and his father Patras Masih were seriously wounded. The police intervened and arrested the killer, a 25-year-old Muslim man. Fr. Khalid Rashid, who celebrated the funeral of the young man, told Fides: "There was much sadness. I launched a message of forgiveness and peace: Christians do not want revenge. The murder is not motivated by religious hatred, but from a dispute between farmers. Of course, Christians are always the most vulnerable. We have trust in the new government and we hope to do more for the protection of minorities."

Accidents and disputes among farmers are frequent, because with the phenomenon of urbanization many Christian farmers in the villages of Punjab - who had received land as a gift by Christian missionaries - move into town and sell the land to Muslim farmers.

The attack is added to the serious accident which occurred in southern Punjab, where a village near Multan was abandoned by more than 1,500 Christian faithful who were at risk of mass killing (see Fides 21/05/2013). Khalid Gill, head of the "All Pakistan Minorities Alliance" (APMA) has strongly condemned the attack on the village of Khushpur demanding the punishment of the murderer and the protection of Christians. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 22/05/2013)