



ASIA/SYRIA - Rape and atrocities on a young Christian in Qusair

Qusair (Agenzia Fides) - Mariam was a 15-year-old Christian from Qusair, a city of the governorate in Homs, 35 km south of the capital. The city, which had become a stronghold of the Syrian rebels, was reconquered by the troops of the regular army at the beginning of June. Mariam's story - sent to Fides thanks to the report of two Catholic priests - is a sign of the brutality of the conflict and the extreme vulnerability of religious minorities. Mariam's family was in town when militants linked to the jihadist group "Jabhat al-Nusra" conquered and occupied it.

While her family was able to escape, Mariam was taken and forced into an Islamic marriage.

Fides sources point out that, through social networks, the fatwa was widespread in Syria produced by Yasir al-Ajlawni - A Salafi sheikh of Jordanian origin, resident in Damascus - who declared lawful, for opponents of the regime of Bashar al-Assad, rape committed against "any non-Sunni Syrian woman." According to the fatwa to capture and rape Alawi or Christian women is not contrary to the precepts of Islam.

The commander of the battalion "Jabhat al-Nusra" in Qusair took Mariam, married and raped her. Then he repudiated her. The next day the young woman was forced to marry another Islamic militant. He also raped her and then repudiated her. The same trend was repeated for 15 days, and Mariam was raped by 15 different men. This psychologically destabilized her and made her insane. Mariam, became mentally unstable and was eventually killed.

"These atrocities are not told by any International Commission" say to Fides two Greek-Catholic priests, Fr. Issam and Fr. Elias who have just returned to town. The two are collecting the cry's and complaints of many families. "Who will do something to protect civilians, the most vulnerable?" they ask. As reported to Fides, the two have just celebrated a Mass to consecrate again the Catholic church of St. Elias in Qusair.

The church was ransacked and desecrated by the guerrillas, and had become a logistic and residential base for rebel groups. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 02/07/2013)