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ASIA/PAKISTAN – Christian girl's rapists will be prosecuted

Kasur (Agenzia Fides) - A court in Pattoki in the district of Kasur, Punjab province, has formalized the charges of rape against two Muslim men who in February raped the Christian 15-year-old Fouzia Bibi. Shabir Ali and Sher Muhammad, the two accused have been charged with rape and will be brought to trial. The girl had been kidnapped and raped repeatedly by the two, who worked on the same farm where Fouzia was employed. The case, followed by the Christian Mushtaq Gill, had been at the center of an attempted cover-up, as often happens in Pakistan when the victims are Christians.
Two weeks ago, the High Court in Lahore had rejected the bail application for Shabir Ali, who was arrested by the police (see Fides 20/6/2013). Even Sher Muhammad, who was arrested a few months after the first defendant has filed bail application that will be considered by the Court in the coming days.
Fouzia's Christian family had been pressured by the police to withdraw the complaint. The police officer who intimidated them, however, was discovered and fired. As recalled in a note sent to Fides by the NGO "Legal Evangelical Association Development" (LEAD), "in Pakistan minorities live under a pall of fear and are discriminated because of religion and culture." In a recent meeting held in Lahore between Christian leaders and society the situation of Christians in Pakistan was analyzed, and a "Memorandum" was created which will be sent to the government (see Fides 03/07/2013). The text indicates the Christian minorities (3% of the population) who are victims of discrimination, injustice, prejudice, economic persecution, religious hatred, sectarian violence. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 05/07/2013)

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