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ASIA/PAKISTAN - Three Christian women stripped naked and humiliated: Justice is moving

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) - In the case of three Christian women stripped naked, humiliated and mocked by Muslims in Kasur – more than a month after the incident, which occurred on June 3, which caused outrage in Pakistan (see Fides 3/7/2013) - justice is finally moving. After pressure and protests on behalf of Christian communities and civil society after the strong appeals to politics and institutions, the High Court in Lahore took note of the issue and sent a district judge in Kasur to look into the incident. The judge will have the task to submit a report within two weeks. The High Court has summoned the two sides in court, recording statements and criticizing the actions of the local police. One of the accused, Muhammad Munir, reporting his story in a sworn statement, admitted that the three Christian women were beaten, stripped naked forced to parade naked in the city. In the statement, sent to Fides, Munir admits that the dispute began because of the encroachment of some herds belonging to the Christian Shoukat Masih and his father Sadiq Masih in Munir's father's land, a landowner. Convinced by others, Munir went with 11 other Muslim men to Shoukat's house, to teach him a lesson. Not finding him, some began to beat the women present, Arshad Bibi, Sajida Bibi and Sauriya Bibi, dragging them by the hair to the market, where they were stripped, mocked and humiliated publicly. Munir says he only witnessed the scene (hence transformed into an eye-witness) and for not taking an active part in the violence. The women's lawyer, the Christian Mushtaq Gill, says to Fides that he is "satisfied with the progress of the facts and the provisions of the High Court". Gill is Director of the NGO LEAD, which is providing free legal assistance to the victims.
The incident in Pakistan has become a "political case" because the landowner in question, the Muslim Abdul Rasheed, is a known supporter of the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N), the ruling party in Punjab and at a federal level. As reported to Fides, the parliamentary Rana Ishaq, a member of the National Assembly in the ranks of the PML-N, has publicly defended and tried to help Abdul Rasheed and his son, in order to avoid them being accused. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 17/07/2013)

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