



ASIA/PAKISTAN - A Protestant Pastor and two laymen accused of blasphemy, other leaders threatened

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) - The Protestant Christian Pastor Adnan and two laymen, Arfan and Mushtaq Masih, resident in Lahore, have been formally accused and charged with "blasphemy". As Fides learns, the complaint was filed by the Muslim Abid Mehmood accusing the three of having written and pronounced derogatory remarks about Islam talking about the text "Why have we become Muslims," written by Maulana Ameer Hamza one of the most important leaders of the Pakistani extremist organization "Jamaat -ud- Dawah" (JuD) . According to the complaint, the episode of blasphemy took place on October 8 in Mushtaq Masih's shop, situated in the neighborhood of "Lala zar Colony", in Lahore. The Christians living in the area are now, "concerned and frightened", fearing retaliation by Islamist militants, says to Fides the NGO LEAD, especially after the recent attacks in Peshawar.

Meanwhile, acts of intimidation against the Christian leaders of the organization "All Pakistan Christian League" (APCL), committed to the defense of Christian minorities in Pakistan continue: The was reported to Fides in a note from the leader of the APCL, Nawaz Salamat , who says he is "very concerned about the safety of our members, in the different provinces". A few months ago, some APCL activists were seized and beaten in Karachi, and then Zeeshan Joseph and Almas Bhatti, APCL activists in Punjab, received serious threats. Last week another member of the APCL, Maqbool Khokhar, was attacked and beaten by extremists in the middle of the night. "The leaders of the APCL - informs Salamat - continue to receive threatening phone calls dictating the closure of all the organization's activities. Otherwise, they will be burned alive with their families".

According to Nawaz Salamat, "most of the attention" of the APCL extremists are motivated by the rapid growth policy and visibility obtained from the movement. Many APCL activists in recent years have had to leave the country for security reasons. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 17/10/2013)