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ASIA/PAKISTAN - Alarm among Christians: the scourge of blasphemy gets worse, four cases in a month

Karachi (Agenzia Fides) - Although many Muslims have expressed solidarity with Christians, victims of the tragic suicide bombing in the church of Peshawar, on September 22, there is a sharp increase in complaints and in cases of blasphemy against Christians in Pakistan. The trend worries the local Churches. As reported to Fides by activists and local priests, four cases of blasphemy against Christians have been recorded in a month. The incidence is four times higher than the monthly average recorded over the past two years and documented by the report carried out by the Catholic Bishops Commission "Justice and Peace".
As reported to Fides, the accusations are patently false, and this confirms that blasphemy is used as an "instrument of revenge" in private controversies, even to attack religious minorities. Activists have reported to Fides cases registered against Christians recently.
At the end of October, Arif Masih and Tariq Masih, who owned a fireworks store in Wazirabad, Punjab suffered a complaint that forced them to hide. The accusers wanted to take revenge because a set of fireworks sold to mark the marriage of Muslim Muhammad Zahid, failed to light up.
A few days before, two Muslim students, in Faisabad, denounced a 50-year-old Christian for having burnt pages of the Koran, but this was not true.
On October 8, the Protestant Christian Pastor Adnan and two faithful, Arfan and Mushtaq Masih, resident in Lahore, were formally accused and charged with "blasphemy". The three were accused of writing and pronouncing derogatory comments regarding Islam talking about the text "Why we became Muslims", written by a Muslim extremist leader.
Another case was registered against the Christian Asif Parvaiz in Lahore on September 25, just three days after the explosions in Peshawar.
According to the police report, Asif sent a text message to an acquaintance insulting Islam, the Quran, Muslims and the Prophet Muhammad.
Finally it should be noted that on 23 September in the metropolis of Karachi, thousands of Muslims ransacked the Christian neighborhood "Michael Town" instigated by a supposed "blasphemy". The homes of more than 300 Christian families were devastated and burned. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 28/11/2013)

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