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ASIA/PAKISTAN - The Sharia Court to the government: for the crime of blasphemy, death is the only and right punishment

Islamabad (Agenzia Fides) - The Federal Court for the Sharia, the Islamic court in Pakistan, has issued an order calling on the Government to amend the penalties for the crime of blasphemy, currently punishable with imprisonment, up to life imprisonment or death penalty.
According to the Court, the possibility of imposing imprisonment or life imprisonment and death penalty must be removed. The Court gave the government two months to adapt the national legal order.
The order, given by a panel of five judges, is based on a judgment of 1990: even then the Court had clarified that for the blasphemy law, death penalty was the only appropriate punishment, as the vilification of the Prophet or of Islam is "an intolerable offense". The Court has therefore called for the immediate implementation of the measure.
The ruling has created stir and turmoil especially in the Christian community in Pakistan and, according to Fides sources, embarrassment in public institutions and in the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who belongs to the Pakistan Muslim League.
In recent days, the Commission "Justice and Peace" of the Bishops of Pakistan had released alarming data on the net increase in complaints and in cases of blasphemy against Christians in Pakistan: four cases of blasphemy against Christians have been recorded within a month (see Fides 28/11/2013).
The incidence is four times higher than the monthly average recorded over the past two years. The charges are often patently false, since blasphemy is used as an "instrument of vengeance" in private controversy. Among Christians sentenced to death for blasphemy there is also Asia Bibi, who has been in prison for over 4 years. (PA)
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