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# ASIA/INDIA - Three convicted and six acquitted for the rape of a nun in the massacres of Christians in Orissa

New Delhi (Agenzia Fides) – There is shock and dismay among the Christians in India after this morning's ruling, March 14, in which a court of first instance in the district of Kandhamal, in Orissa, condemned three people and acquitted six for the gang rape of the Catholic nun Meena Barwa. Rape was one of the most heinous crimes carried out during the anti-Christian massacres in Orissa in 2008, when more than 400 villages were "cleansed" of all Christians and more than 5,600 houses and 296 churches were burned, 100 were killed (but the government only recognized 56), thousands were injured, women were raped, 56,000 men, women and children were left homeless. Sister Meena was raped by several men and humiliated, forced to march half-naked through the streets by her torturers, as a trophy of violence.
According to the "Global Council of Indian Christians" (GCIC) this is a "farce of justice", since "all 9 criminals were clearly involved". "The verdict of the Court - says Sajan K. George, president of the GCIC to Fides - shows the insensitivity of the judges towards the terrible crime. The verdict certifies the failure at all levels: of documentation, investigation, prosecution of cases. The ruling is a clear case of connivance of officials with extremist forces. It enshrines their support for violence and shows a deliberate attempt to sink justice". According to George, "the police's complicity with the perpetrators of the crime, which emerged during the investigation and prosecution, indicate an institutional bias against the Christian community". The GCIC denounces "deliberate neglect of duties constitutionally required".
About 3,232 criminal complaints were filed by Christians and the police accepted 1,541. In 169 cases, the proceedings were concluded with full acquittal: in all 1,597 were acquitted (and these defendants are a small number compared to the mass of people who actively participated in the massacres). The acquittals, explain sources of Fides, often occur because the key witnesses are threatened, intimidated or scared. 86 additional trials have seen very mild sentences. In another 90 cases, investigations are still ongoing, but the more time passes, the less chance there is of collecting irrefutable evidence. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 14/03/2014)

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