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ASIA/PAKISTAN - Asia Bibi, a new hearing on March 26

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) - Justice in Pakistan tries again: the first hearing, after two postponements, in the appeal for Asia Bibi, a Christian woman unjustly accused and sentenced to death for blasphemy is set for March 26. This was reported to Fides Agency by the Christian lawyer Naeem Shakir, head of the woman's defense team.
The lawyer is preparing the points of the defense with the aim to prove that "the charges against her have always been false". The trial has been postponed twice and the Court administration was on strike in recent days, but the lawyer says he has "high hopes". Meanwhile, Asia Bibi is in the women's prison in Multan "in good health and strictly guarded for security reasons", Shakir told Fides: "The woman prays and hopes". With regards to Asia Bibi's case, in prison for 4 years, even the working group of the European Parliament on freedom of religion has recently intervened. In a note on March 19, sent to Fides, the group says: "We welcome the decision of the Lahore High Court to initiate the trial appeal for Asia Bibi. We note with regret that, in two hearings, the judges were on leave. We trust that the judges appointed are present for the third hearing". The text sent to Fides continues: "We call on all those involved in the case to show courage and not to give in to any pressure or external threat. We ask the government of Pakistan to safeguard the independence and effective functioning of the Lahore High Court. In addition, we urge the Pakistani authorities to provide adequate protection for all persons involved in the case, now and after a possible, future judicial decision".
The group will continue to follow this case closely, as well as other cases involving the blasphemy laws in Pakistan that the European Parliament calls to reform, in order to avoid abuse, or repeal. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 24/03/2014)

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