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ASIA/PAKISTAN - Asia Bibi, the appeal has been postponed due to the "counterparty's use of tactics"

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) - The first hearing of the appeal for Asia Bibi, a Pakistani woman accused of blasphemy, has again been postponed. Not for the absence of judges, but for the use of tactics on behalf of the counterparty. As reported to Fides by Asia Bibi's defense college, this morning at 8:00 am, the Lahore High Court, the college of two judges, called Asia's case as 13th on the list. At 2pm, the defense lawyers were ready for the opening of the hearing. Instead the counterparty was not present. After 10 minutes, the two judges who were rather annoyed for the lack of respect, decided to grant a further adjournment. "The judges were calm and wanted to examine the case. The Court will not tolerate such strategies", explained Asia's defense lawyers to Fides. "We have solid arguments and we are ready to present them. We remain very confident, from a legal point of view", the lawyers explain. "The fears are all on the other side".
In the case of Asia Noreen Bibi, the "counterpart" is the Muslim Mullah Qari Muhammad Sallam, the man who on June 19, 2009 submitted complaint no. 326/2009 to the police station in the town of Nankana Sahib, accusing Bibi of blasphemy, according to Article 295c of the Penal Code. After investigation, the police submitted its report on July 12 and the case went to trial in the court of first instance in Nankana Sahib, before judge Naveed Iqbal.
The facts that Asia is accused of (insulting the Prophet Muhammad, after an arguing with other Muslim women) took place on 14 June 2009. As reported to Fides, the defense lawyers in the appeal aim to prove this five-day gap between when the episode happened (June 14) and when the complaint was submitted (June 19) in order to show that the allegations are completely false. Asia was sentenced to death on November 8, 2010 by the court of first instance. Appeal no. 2509 was filed before the Lahore High Court on November 11, 2010. But, for reasons of expediency, context, religious and political pressures, only now the Court, four years later, has taken the case into consideration. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 26/03/2014)

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