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ASIA/PAKISTAN - Appeal for Christians sentenced to death for "blasphemy via sms" has been filed at the High Court

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) - The lawyers of Shafqat Emmanuel and Shagufta Kasuar, the Christian married couple sentenced to death for "blasphemy via sms" with a verdict issued on April 4 by a court of first instance (see Fides 7/4/2014) have filed an appeal to the Lahore High Court. This was communicated to Fides by the NGO "World Vision in Progress" (WVIP) which, together with international partners, is following the case and providing legal assistance and taking care of the couples 4 children, in prison since July 2013. The two, say the lawyers to Fides, are illiterate and completely unaware of how this absurd accusation has shaken their lives.
The NGO informs that the two Christian lawyers Nadeem Hassain and Eric John, the couple's defenders, have been repeatedly threatened in order to discourage them from following the case. "Even the judge who issued the first instance judgment was victim of harassment and intimidation on behalf of Islamic extremists", explained Farrukh H. Saif, Executive Director of WVIP to Fides. The verdict of conviction was therefore strongly influenced and capital punishment imposed without any evidence. "We ask the international community to speak out against this injustice", notes Farrukh H. Saif. "We will do everything possible, trusting in God's providence", he concludes. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 09/04/2014)

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