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ASIA/PAKISTAN - Discrimination and violence against a Christian businessman, threatened by Islamic extremists

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) - The Christian Jabar Masih, from the district of Nahla in Lahore, has been threatened by extremists, "If you do not convert to Islam, you cannot continue your business", they ordered. Jabar, who lives with his family in the Christian "colony" of Nahla, sells cooked rice in a small shop. It is an economic activity that with difficulty guarantees survival. The extremists have forced him to close the store, threatening death or a complaint to the police. Masih turned to lawyer Sardar Musthaq Gill who assured him legal assistance, accompanying him to file a complaint to the police. The lawyer explains to Fides: "At the basis of such acts of violence, which are very common in Pakistani society, there is a discriminatory ideology, because, according to the extremists, Christians should not be allowed to carry out economic or commercial activities, as they belong to the lower castes. They are considered 'inferior'. So they should only do the most menial jobs".
In the area another Christian man who sells fruit was a victim of the same threats. It must be said that local Christians remember well what happened in March 2013 last year in "Joseph Colony" in Lahore, where a whole neighborhood was burned down. The Christians of the colony in Nahla fear that the event could be repeated and are terrified. "This kind of daily pressures and discriminatory ideology is the basis of the constant bleeding of the Christian faithful who, slowly, are leaving Pakistan and are choosing other destinations, such as India or Europe, in the hope of living in peace" said lawyer Gill to Fides. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 28/06/2014)

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