

**Question for written answer E-005856/2016
to the Commission**
Rule 130
Lorenzo Fontana (ENF)

Subject: Protecting freedom of religion in the Punjab

On 29 June 2016, the international press reported that three individuals in the Punjab have been sentenced to death for blasphemy. The sentence is said to be based on an attempt at extortion, which went on to have more serious repercussions when two of the three individuals arrested informed the investigators that they were in possession of a blasphemous audio recording of the third suspect. After searching the suspect's home, the police asserted that they had found evidence of the incriminating sermon, thereby substantiating the sentence. The suspect's relatives, however, maintain that the audio recording does not belong to them and that an appraisal has not been carried out to verify its authenticity. Two of the three individuals arrested are Christian.

In light of the systematic persecution of Christians in Pakistan, and the fact that the country's blasphemy law is one of the strictest in the Muslim world, can the Commission say:

- whether it is aware of the case mentioned above;
- how it views the degree of protection granted to the Christian minority in the Punjab?