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ASIA/MALAYSIA - Two Muslim prayer rooms attacked: police investigate

Johor (Agenzia Fides) - Despite the arrest of eight young men made yesterday by the Malaysian Police, Malaysia continues to suffer small episodes of vandalism against places of worship. Today, as Fides learned from sources in Malaysia, in the early hours of the night two Muslim "Surauas" - typical of traditional sites of prayer for Malaysians - were attacked in the town of Muar, in Johor, on the southern Malaysian peninsula. The police found that the windows of its rooms had been broken and part of the walls and gates were burned with kerosene. According to investigators, the attacks could still be tied to the controversy about using the name "Allah," which since January 8 this year has seen the same kind of attacks against places of worship: a total of 11 Christian churches, a mosque, two Muslim Surauas and a Sikh temple. One of the churches, the Catholic Church of Saint Elizabeth, attacked by vandals on January 14, is located in Johor.
The political forces have condemned the vandalism. In particular, Lim Guan Eng, Secretary of the Malaysian Democratic Action Party (DAP) - the coalition that was in opposition - said that "these irresponsible attacks clearly seek to cause suspicion and tensions among ethnic and religious communities of the Malaysian society. We ask the government to investigate and punish those responsible, to preserve the harmony of the country." Meanwhile, Christian leaders and Muslim leaders are spreading calls for dialogue and harmony in the country, deploring the violence that, as sources of Fides claim, "are likely to be isolated individuals, often zealous and imprudent youth." The Christian Churches have launched a campaign of prayer and fasting for peace, while they also have organized, in collaboration with Muslim organizations, conferences and meetings for reflection to promote mutual understanding. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 21/01/2010)

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