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ASIA/INDIA - Catholic church damaged in attack by Hindu fundamentalists in Karnataka

Karwar (Agenzia Fides) - In the Catholic community of Karwar in Karnataka, there is anger, fear, but also the firm conviction that "the answer is that of forgiveness and prayer." This is what Fides has been told by Monsignor Simon Tellis, Vicar General of the Diocese of Karwar, in the aftermath of yet another attack on a Catholic church. The church is located at Honnavar, a coastal town in the district of Uttara Kannada. On the morning of May 12, the faithful found the windows of the church broken and several statues and vestments damaged. The action has been identified and defined as "a typical attack of Hindu extremist groups who follow their agenda of hatred and aggression towards other religious communities."
The Bishop of Karwar, Bishop Derek Fernandes, who was outside the area, said he was "shocked and concerned" and urged the faithful to pray and not to react in any way to provocation."
"It's exactly what the extremists want," said Msgr. Tellis. "With these acts, they are trying to wound the sensibilities of Christians, to spark riots and violence on a large scale. But, for us this is the time to make Christ's love triumph, to practice the word of love to enemies, to forgive. We will continue to seek dialogue and building harmony in society," Msgr. Tellis said.
"These groups aim to create chaos and violence. The extremists are certainly few in comparison to most of the Hindus, who are open-minded and moderate, and appreciate the presence and work of the Catholic Church, both in education and social commitment. We believe that the situation in Karnataka is not as alarming as some reports have said, threatening another wave of anti-Christian persecution, as in Orissa. But the Hindu radicals feel stronger with the political coverage of the BJP (Barathiya Janata Party), a nationalist party that governs the state, and therefore carry out these raids without facing consequences."
"In any case - the Vicar concludes - we have advised and reported everything to the police and together with the Archbishop of Bangalore, we intend to make our voices heard with the civil authorities, calling for protection and conservation of our rights, recalling the constructive role and contribution that the Catholic Church offers to Indian society." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 14/05/2010)

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