



ASIA/PAKISTAN - Three murdered humanitarian workers were Christian foreigners

Islamabad (Agenzia Fides) – Fides sources in the Swat Valley, working in government, military, and NGO settings, have confirmed the murder of three humanitarian workers in the Swat Valley (see Fides 27/8/2010). The three were foreign volunteers, all of them Christians who belonged to an international organization that, for security reasons, is still anonymous.

A high-ranking government official in the Swat Valley has told Fides that “the three volunteers were working in Mingora and in the surrounding areas to bring relief to the flood victims. On August 23, they were returning to their base camp in a convoy. A group of Taliban militia attacked the convoy, wounding 5 or 6 volunteers and kidnapping 3. On the morning of August 25, a group of soldiers of the Pakistani army found the lifeless bodies of the three volunteers. For security reasons, in accord with the humanitarian organization they belonged to, their names and the name of the organization have remained a secret.” Following the serious incident, they told Fides, they have decided to raise an alert for Taliban threats to NGOs.

According to Fides sources in the Pakistani army, “the Taliban have repeatedly threatened international organizations operating in the area. The level of security of the rescue operation has been increased and new contingents of rangers are on the ground to protect humanitarian work, mainly in the Swat and in other areas of potential danger.” The bodies of three were taken to Islamabad, under the supervision of the Pakistani army. The Taliban, meanwhile, are trying to bring relief to flood victims and thus intend to buy the hearts of survivors. A source of Fides in a Pakistani NGO called “Life for All,” present with a team in the area of the Swat, told Fides: “We strongly condemn the killing of the three workers. These volunteers come from abroad to help Pakistan in this moment of absolute necessity: for that we thank them.” (PA) (Agenzia Fides 28/08/2010)