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ASIA/PAKISTAN - Christian and Hindu villages flooded intentionally

Islamabad (Agenzia Fides) – It is something that adds to the tragedy of suffering and frustration of the flooding: the poor villages, many of which are inhabited by Christian and Hindu citizens, are deliberately flooded. The flow of the floods is being diverted by dams and artificial barriers erected to save the lands of large landowners and notables. The occurrence that was denounced by Fides two days ago (see Fides 31/08/2010) is now finding further confirmation in new episodes that NGOs working in the area continue to report to Fides, as well as in the complaints being made by intellectuals and diplomats in Pakistan. Abdullah Hussain Haroon, Pakistan's ambassador to the UN, has confirmed to BBC that there was evidence that landowners had allowed embankments to burst and that the waters were diverted into defenseless villages of poor farmers. The diplomat has called for an official government investigation into the matter.
Fides, after the sad experience of the Christian village of Khokharabad near Multan (leaving 15 dead and 377 homeless), collected the dramatic testimonies of displaced persons from four villages in the province of Sindh: Mirpur Bathoro, Jati, Dharo, and Laiqpur, inhabited by Christian and Hindu minorities. The villages are located near the town of Sajawal, a densely populated area in the district of Thatta, 80 km from Karachi, which has been strongly affected by flooding in recent days. The people of these villages have received notice from the local civilian authorities to move urgently into other surrounding areas given the arrival of the water, which came with force: the houses of neighboring villages and fields were destroyed and over 2,800 families, both Christian and Hindu, are homeless and landless, in misery. The waters came as a result of an artificial diversion, built to save the agricultural estates belonging to powerful landowners who convinced - and some say in a corrupt manner - local officials to divert the course of water and save their land.
The head of the village of Jati said: "Once again the strength of the powerful crushes the poor. We Christians and Hindus in this area of Sindh are treated like animals; we do not receive any recognition from the government." Another villager said: "We are more than 2,800 families with no food, no water, no home. We are desperate."
Another case that has come to the attention of Fides is the area of Jacobabad, also in Sindh: the outskirts of the city were flooded by a system for diverting waters in order to save the city of Shikarpur. Villagers in the area have vigorously protested to the authorities for such operations. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 09/02/2010)

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