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ASIA/PAKISTAN - “Diverted flooding”: poor and minorities suffer

Karachi (Agenzia Fides) – "There are powerful and influential people with connections in government or who are in political parties: their territories have a 'priority' in being saved from the floods. The villages of the poor, whether Muslims, Christians, or Hindus, are left to fend for themselves." This is what Fides learned from Dominic Gill, Executive Secretary of Caritas of Karachi, confirming the phenomenon of "diverted flooding" that has led to destruction, displacement, and poverty in many villages in the province of Sindh. The phenomenon is confirmed by a Catholic source, who asked to remain anonymous, in a statement released by the German office of Aid to the Church in Need.

"Many of these landowners - said Gill - act on their own initiative, without any permission from the authorities. Thanks to their men, they break bridges and build dams and canals to save their land without any regard for the thousands of people in surrounding areas that face dramatic consequences. Sometimes, the authorities are unaware of it; others say that they deliberately ignore the facts. Certainly, there is an urgent need to be on guard for these phenomena which particularly affect the poor in these villages. Among them are Muslim, Christian, and Hindu villages."

"We are concerned about this phenomenon - Gill concludes - and we are counting on the intervention of civil authorities." Caritas Karachi currently assists the refugees who have flocked into the city, due to flooding in the surrounding area. Among the approximately 50,000 displaced people in the city, the majority are Muslims and there are only a few Christian families.

"It is indeed difficult to speak of discrimination in the floods," Fides was told by Peter Jacob, Secretary of the Commission for Justice and Peace of the Pakistani Bishops' Conference. “The discrimination is occurring in the distribution of aid, but as far as the diverted flooding, the victims are the poor from every religious communities: Muslims, Christians and Hindus." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 09/02/2010)

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