



## **ASIA/PAKISTAN - Floods and terrorism: a nation on its knees**

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) – "We are doing our best in this extremely difficult time for the nation. The fury of floods is intensified with the nightmare of terrorism: two disasters that strike us to the heart. There is great suffering in the population on account of these two evils. As Christians, we continue to work to care for displaced persons, to offer a word of hope, and to pray." These were the words of Archbishop Lawrence Saldanha of Lahore, President of the Pakistani Bishops' Conference, in an interview with Fides, following the new attack that has taken place in northwestern Pakistan.

"There is a clear strategy: to take advantage of the tragedy that the country is suffering. The government is at a weak moment and has to respond to this emergency, as well as the controversy and discontent. The army is working to contribute to relief operations and civil protection. The terrorists want to take this opportunity to stand up and lead an attack on a nation that is already devastated" Fides was told by Fr. Mario Rodrigues, National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in Pakistan, after the third terrorist attack to shake the nation in a matter of days.

Fr. Mario describes the situation: "The expanse of water seen covering the fields is impressive. Refugees are desperately calling for help; mothers mourn their lost children. Making aid reach the victims is very difficult, given the lack of roads. I think that the country will need at least two years in order to recover from this disaster. International aid, on all levels, is more necessary than ever as the internal forces alone cannot cope with all the urgent needs and necessities."

Recounting the efforts of rescuers, Fr. Rodrigues said: "Efforts are being made to bring the refugees to safety in big cities like Karachi and Lahore. I am not a pessimist: Christian hope is never lacking and I see so many hands involved in the solidarity effort, without placing limits and without borders. We count on everyone's help and on the mobilization of Christian communities throughout the world," he concluded. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 09/06/2010)