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ASIA/PAKISTAN - Fear among Christians in Karachi, suffering “insecurity”

Karachi (Agenzia Fides) – "There are no imminent threats, but there is still fear evident among the Christian community. In Pakistan, we Christians are in a precarious condition: we do not know what may happen in the next five minutes," Fides was told by Fr. Diego Saleh, President of the "Justice and Peace Commission" of the Diocese of Karachi, following the news of an attack, which occurred on the evening of September 18, in a Pentecostal Christian Church in the District of Shah Latif Town, in Karachi.
The church was attacked and looted by a group of Islamic extremists who burned furniture and holy books. According to local sources, the attack is linked to the “Koran Burning Day,” which has not yet sounded its last echo and is still being used by some extremist Muslim leaders to fuel anti-Christian hatred.
Fr. Saleh Diego added: "We condemn the attack, asking for the protection of the Government and, as the Christian community in Pakistan, the opportunity to live peacefully and freely in our country. We demand respect for all holy places and holy books of any religion."
The priest, who is also Chancellor of the Diocese of Karachi, told Fides: "I just spoke with the Archbishop Evarist Pinto, who expressed his concern: we want to avoid, as has happened in the past months, violence against Christian places or districts that could spread to other parts of the city. "
Of course, observes Fr. Diego, we cannot neglect the "reckless actions" of some Protestant Christian denominations, which have a highly intolerant attitude towards Muslims. The church that was attacked was opened two or three years ago in the middle of a Muslim neighborhood. It had no Pastor and very few Christians attended it. It was an easy target for extremists," he says.
In this situation, the Catholic Church in Karachi has been active in dialogue with other religious communities and other institutions, to defuse tensions. "We are establishing, as citizens, a special 'Committee for Peace' which will bring together Christian leaders from different denominations, and involve Muslim leaders and civil leaders. We continue to work for social and religious harmony, a valuable asset to be protected in our city." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 21/09/2010)

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