



ASIA/INDIA - Protestant pastor killed in Orissa "because he was a man of reconciliation"

Bhubaneswar (Agenzia Fides) – “This was murder. My brother had blood oozing out of his mouth, hands and legs tied in an unnatural way and his clothes were torn,” Fides was told by Dushashan Pradhan, brother to Pentecostal Christian Pastor Saul Pradhan, 45 years old, found dead on 11 January in the village of Pakala, in Kandhamal district, Orissa, theatre for the anti-Christian massacres of 2008.

The Pastor was found dead in circumstances which still need to be ascertained, but the police called to investigate the case said that it would be “an accidental death due to freezing.” The official version is not yet confirmed by autopsy, which is awaiting results. Meanwhile, even before the results come back, two activists from a radical Hindu group, who were the last to be seen in the company of the pastor, were nevertheless arrested .

The pastor's family categorically denies the version released until this point about the cause of death. Nimata, the wife of the pastor, in great pain, told Fides: “He was killed because he wanted to reconcile Christians and Hindus in the village. He tried to do so until the end, even reaching out to those who had set fire to the houses of Christians.”

Father Manoj Kuma Nayak, a Catholic priest involved in the rehabilitation of victims following the attacks, after having visited the village in question in recent days, notes with worry that “violence could explode again in the district if the authorities do not stop the hate campaign.”

Even Bipra Charan Nayak, representative of the “Association of Survivors of Kandhamal”, believes that the pastor was killed by Hindu radicals who “are putting in place a systematic plan to eliminate Christian leaders, labelling these murders as accidents”. The leader launches the alarm and urges the authorities to provide adequate protection to Christian leaders. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 17/1/2011)