



## **ASIA/INDIA - Christians take to the streets to protest against the Report on the attacks in Karnataka**

Bangalore (Agenzia Fides) – Thousands of Christians in India, of all confessions, will peacefully take to the streets in Bangalore on Saturday, 5 February, to demand respect for their rights. A torchlight procession will travel through the city streets, collecting Christian citizens – but also moderate Muslims and Hindus - who want to express dissent and protest at the “Report on anti-Christian violence”, which occurred in Karnataka in 2008. The Report, drafted and published in recent days by the Commission of Inquiry headed by retired judge B. K. Somashekara, is defined as “false and unfair” because it denies all responsibility on the part of Hindu extremist groups and absolves the activities of the Government of Karnataka, led by the Hindu nationalist Baratiya Janata Party (BJP) (see Fides 1/2/2011).

“This refers to the fundamental defence of justice and rights for Christians. We must make the voice of dissent rising from civil society heard. We ask that the Report be withdrawn and replaced with a new impartial investigation. Otherwise we risk that the Hindu extremist movements which seek to eliminate the Christian presence from Indian society, will end up having the upper hand, with institutional support,” Fides was told by Joseph Dias, a Catholic activist from the Christian Secular Forum, among the organisers of the initiative.

The Christians, notes Dias, are victims twice-over: “On one side they have suffered, and still continue to suffer attacks and violence, in general indifference; and on the other side, there are over 300 cases of complaints against Christians recorded in the courts of Karnataka, accused of fraudulent and violent conversions. We demand that these procedures, based on totally false accusations, be erased immediately.”

The Christians also emphasise the “clear responsibility” of the BJP: “In Karnataka and in other Indian states where the party holds power, anti-Christian attacks have risen substantially,” says Dias. In 2008, during a wave of attacks in Karnataka, there were over 113 anti-Christian attacks in 29 districts. In the past two years 138 other episodes of violence have been registered against Christian persons, places or institutions. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 3/2/2011)