



ASIA/INDONESIA - Churches patrolled after the attacks, Christians are afraid

Jakarta (Agenzia Fides) – Indonesian police officers patrol Christian churches to discourage further violence, following the aftermath of the attacks in Temanggung (Archdiocese of Semarang, in Central Java) (see Fides 8/02/2010), sources in Indonesia tell Fides, expressing “serious concerns and fears by the Christian community in Semarang, Jakarta, but also in other cities of the archipelago.”

A man has been arrested, suspected to be among the organisers of the violence, but his identity and his potential membership to an organisation have not been disclosed. Meanwhile, the militant group Islamic Defender Front has denied being involved in the disorder.

The President of the Commission for Interreligious Dialogue of the Indonesian Bishops Conference, Bishop Petrus Canisius Mandagi, said that “religious minorities have been left without any protection from the state, calling for “a decisive step” to put an end to the violence and calling on the Christian faithful to not fall into the spiral of revenge but to forgive.

The Indonesian President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, criticised for the police's lack of action, has ordered the regional chiefs of police and the army to implement a prevention plan. The President has committed publicly to defending religious freedom.

Some groups that defend human rights, meanwhile, are calling for the resignation of Minister for Religious Affairs, Suryadharma Ali, accused of justifying the violence, for obstructing the draft revision of the old blasphemy law (of 1965) and to have issued a restrictive decree in 2008 regarding the “Ahmadiyah”, legitimizing acts of violence against the group, considered “heretical.” (PA) (Agenzia Fides 9/2/2011)