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ASIA/INDIA - New wave of anti-Christian violence in Orissa: the nightmare returns for faithful

Bhubaneshwar (Agenzia Fides) – A new wave of anti-Christian violence has once again plunged the local faithful into terror, local Fides' sources report, alarmed that tribal Christians in the district of Malkangiri, Orissa, have suffered repeated attacks since December. In the last month, attacks have intensified. More than ten episodes have been registered, during which several of the faithful were injured, among them pregnant women and children. According to Pastor Vijay Purusu, from the Evangelical Church, "Bethel Church", Christians have been attacked and beaten in night raids. At least four families, terrified, have fled their homes.
Orissa (central-eastern India), and in particular the district of Khandamal, was the scene of a massive series of attacks and aggressions against Christians in 2007-2008, when over 6,600 Christian homes were destroyed and more than 56 thousand people were left homeless. Now, members of the local Christian community tell Fides, it is feared that these new episodes, the work of the same militant fundamentalist Hindu movement "Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh" (RSS), responsible for the violent attacks three years ago and still unpunished, can sow panic again, driving out Christians, to the indifference of local authorities.
The Christians, in recent weeks, reported the violence to local police who have made no official response nor taken any action. The faithful also created local "peace committees", to defuse the tensions which, according to local sources, are especially needed for the future conversions of some tribal villagers to Christianity, frowned upon by those Hindus. "The attacks are motivated by the fact that the Hindus continue to despise and envy the good work done by Christians in the social, health and welfare sectors," explain our sources.
Meanwhile, Orissa remains at the centre of the political scene: The All India Christian Council (AICC) sent a Memorandum to the Indian Union Minister for the Interior, Fr Chidambaram and the Prime Minister of the State of Orissa, Naveen Patnaik, calling for the founding of a "National Investigation Agency", to establish the responsibility of the Hindu extremist network "Sangh Parivar" in anti-Christian violence which erupted in Orissa in 2008. John Dayal, AICC leader, said that "there is no doubt that the Sangh Parivar elements are involved in the violence."
Another serious incident, reported by Fides, relates to the state of Rajasthan, in north-western India. A Christian Pastor in Jaipur, from the Adivasi tribe, was forced to walk naked for over 5 km on the city's main road, mocked by some young Hindu extremists on motorcycles who abused, stripped and beat him. The incident, not reported by the local media, occurred on 1 February. However, more than a month after it was reported to police, none of the perpetrators has been arrested. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 9/3/2011)

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