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ASIA/INDIA - Good Friday march and prayer for the victims of the rising anti-Christian attacks

Mumbai (Agenzia Fides) – On Good Friday, 22 April, there will be a silent pilgrimage, accompanied by fasting and prayer on the streets of Mumbai for more than 20,000 Indian Christians of all denominations. The initiative launched by Catholic NGO, Catholic Secular Forum (CSF), and supported by numerous Christian groups and associations, will be dedicated to prayer for the persecuted faithful and particularly for the victims of the anti-Christian attacks in India. Joseph Dias, Catholic lay person and director of CSF, tells Fides that "the community of believers has recognised the need to dedicate Good Friday, the day in which we reflect and pray about Christ's crucifixion, to all the 'crucified' faithful today in India and around the world."
The main pilgrimage will be held in Mumbai with over 20,000 thousand people expected to participate. It will begin at the Sacred Heart Church, and after 10 km reach the Convent of St Charles. Pilgrimages will also be held in other major Indian cities such as Delhi, Calcutta, Bangalore and others who are organising similar initiatives.
In fact, Christians are alarmed because, Dias emphasizes, "anti-Christian attacks by Hindu extremist groups are on the rise: in 2011 there is one attack a day on average. Sometimes the attacks are concentrated in some areas, such as Orissa or Karnataka, but we can't say that any state in India is immune."
In Karnataka for example, explains Dias, we cannot speak of a "new wave" because "since 2008 the attacks have not ceased. The recent incidents represent a dramatic confirmation."
"The CSF," he continues, "denounced the criminal alliance between army chiefs and Hindu extremist leaders responsible for the anti-Christian violence of recent years which has occurres in the states of Orissa, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, and still continues" (see Fides 28/3/2011).
Dias notes that "Christians are easy victims because they do not respond with violence, nor with revenge, but through prayer and forgiveness." On the reasons for the rise in attacks, the director of CSF tells Fides: "Often the excuse is a false accusation of proselytism and forced conversions. The real issue is that Hindu extremists do not tolerate the social commitment of Christians in schools and hospitals, and above all their valuable work in promoting the human, economic and social situation of Dalits and tribals, who are downtrodden and discriminated against in society on the basis of caste, and as a result they often ask to embrace the Christian faith." (PA)
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