



ASIA/PAKISTAN-The alarm of a priest, "the country is in the hands of the Taliban"

Rome (Agenzia Fides) - "Pakistan is now in the hands of the Taliban. They have become even stronger, even after the death of Bin Laden. And enjoy the consensus of large segments of the population: the ordinary citizen, the average Muslim Pakistani, is very angry with the government, the United States and NATO, and this is why they look favorably on the actions of the Taliban groups ": it is the alarm launched by Fides on behalf of Fr. Bonnie Mendes, a Catholic priest from Faisalabad, the outgoing head of the Asia section of Caritas Internationalis. Fr. Mendes speaks to Fides the day after the serious attack in Karachi, where Taliban groups attacked a military base, with a "siege" that lasted 12 hours, killing at least 11 people and capturing several hostages. This is the third attack on Pakistani military targets within a month, and this, observes Fr. Mendes, "shows that the Taliban groups, after the death of Bin Laden, have not been discouraged or disheartened, but instead, they have given proof of their strength and firmness."

Faced with a weak government and institutions that fail to react, "the Taliban are finding more and more space in society. Citizens criticize the government's attitude towards the U.S., NATO, towards intervention in Afghanistan, saying that the strategy has failed. The country, among other things, is shifting on a geopolitical and geostrategic level, seeking the alliance of China and Russia, and the axis with the U.S. could be under discussion, "he says.

In this delicate phase in the history of the country, "extremism takes hold without any forces capable of stopping it." Religious minorities, including Christians, are "annihilated and reduced to silence" but "at the moment they are not the preferred or significant target : the military, the government headquarters, the Nato offices instead are the targets" explains Fr. Mendes.

The impression, says the priest is that "we will not be able to stop them if the popular consensus they have grows. We must try instead, at this point, to talk with them. " "We will see what happens - he concludes – while many observers once again raise the specter of a new military coup to bring back order and prevent chaos." (PA)
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