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ASIA/PAKISTAN - Caritas, the only channel that gives humanitarian aid to religious minorities

Islamabad (Agenzia Fides) - "The only channel to get humanitarian aid to displaced people belonging to religious minorities, Christians and Hindus, is Caritas, although government agencies and other Muslim NGOs deny it" says Fr. Mario Rodrigues to Fides, national Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) in Pakistan, after severe floods hit Sindh in past weeks, causing over 7 million refugees and 1.1 million homes damaged or destroyed. The Director of the PMS said: "We must be careful: After the floods of 2010, Catholic organizations have also provided humanitarian aid through local NGOs, but did not give assistance to religious minorities". During the severe floods of 2010, several sources denounced discrimination in the distribution of humanitarian aid, which were denied to religious minorities. Now such incidents have been repeated in the district of Bedin (see Fides 16/9/2011).
Fr. Rodrigues complains: "What seems clear from this latest tragedy is that the government has failed in the prevention. The poor people suffer the consequences. Among the thousands displaced are Christians, who live in almost all the districts of Sindh".
The United Nations has issued an appeal for solidarity to raise 365 million dollars in favor of the affected populations. But the donor countries are asking the Pakistani government to establish a monitoring system to ensure transparency in aid management and to control that the funds actually reach the flood victims. Much of the money raised in 2010, in fact, according to the denunciation of some observers, went lost in the rivulets of corruption, cronyism and misgovernment. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 22/09/2011)

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