agenzia fides
Fondata nel 1927
Organo di informazione delle Pontificie Opere Missionarie
http://www.fides.org

ASIA/AFGHANISTAN-Burning of Korans: "Respect religious feelings to win the hearts of the Afghans"

Kabul (Agenzia Fides) - "The respect for religious feelings is the key to win the hearts of Afghans. It is a very important factor, that all the Western powers and international operators should take into consideration": this is what the Jesuit Fr. Stanley Fernandes SJ, Director of the "Jesuit Refugee Service" of South Asia says in an interview with Fides, commenting on the mass protests that followed the news of the burning of the Korans by the U.S. contingent of soldiers. On the fifth day of anti-American demonstrations in several cities, even the United Nations were affected and, since the beginning of the violence, about thirty people have been killed.
The Jesuits have been present in Afghanistan for 7 years, they carry out works of a humanitarian nature and are active in education and professional formation. Fr. Fernandes, who spends long periods in the country, after a recent trip to Kabul, told Fides: "The situation is critical. After the incident of the burning of Korans, people are outraged because it is an episode that hurts the religious feelings, an issue that can incite the people. There is no justification for violence, but this is what happens if one touches religious matters. The official apology on behalf of the U.S. has arrived, but I think it will take time before the situation returns to calm."
The Jesuit continued: "I do not think one risks a religious war against the West, but incidents like this, when Westerners hurt the feelings of the Afghans, do not help build confidence and a peaceful atmosphere. In these cases, then, the instinct of the crowd prevails, giving the floodgates to violence."
"When one works in the Afgan context, where Islam is the majority - remarks Fr. Fernandes – it is essential to do so profoundly respecting the culture and religion of the local population. In these cases, the relationship between international forces and local people is very delicate; a fragile balance is established: we must therefore pay close attention to the sensitivity and to the local context and to guard it."
With regards to the experience of the Jesuits, Fr. Fernandes said: "We build good relations with local people, we try to help them in the development, respecting their feelings, doing humanitarian work and working in the education field. We have been there for 7 years and the people greatly appreciate us. Through our experience, the population of Afghanistan is open and tolerant and appreciates the help to improve their social status and well-being. Hopefully, thanks to many people of good will among Afghans and international organizations on the ground, violence ceases and the situation will soon return to normal." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 25/2/2012)

I contenuti del sito sono pubblicati sotto Licenza Creative Common - http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/deed.it