



ASIA/INDIA - More than 5,000 Christians take to the streets in Orissa to demand justice

Bhubaneswar (Agenzia Fides) - About 5,000 Christians took to the streets in Orissa staging a peaceful demonstration to demand justice, on the anniversary of the massacres that hit the Christian community in Kandhamal district in 2008. As local sources of Fides inform, the event was marked by slogans and banners demanding "justice, peace and harmony," while many of the participants had covered their mouths with black tape, signifying silence and marginalization in which they have been relegated. The march was authorized only the day before by the authorities, who feared the reaction of Hindu extremist groups.

His Exc. Mgr. Sarat Nayak, Bishop of Berhampur participated in the demonstration and publicly stated: "Peace can only come when truth and justice are re-established." Fr. Ajay Singh, an activist for human rights in Orissa, explained: "This demonstration intends to pay tribute to the dead, seek justice, security and livelihoods for the victims. This is necessary in order to capture the government's attention and encourage them to build solidarity among them."

In a statement sent to Fides Agency, the NGO "Christian Solidarity Worldwide", which monitors the condition of Christians, said: "It is important to remember that in 2008 the massacres in Orissa occurred eight months after the first wave of violence that had remained unpunished. The only way to stop the extremists is to ensure legality and justice".

In a message sent to Fides, Mgr. John Barwa, SVD, Archbishop of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar, in Orissa, defines the 2008 attacks in Kandhamal "crimes against humanity", as "widespread and carried out with careful planning". In Orissa 100 Christians were killed and there were 56 thousand refugees. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 01/09/2012)