



ASIA/PAKISTAN - Film on Mohammed: firing at the Cathedral, a Christian injured in Hyderabad

Hyderabad (Agenzia Fides) - Tension and fear for Christians in Hyderabad, a city in the province of Sindh in southern Pakistan. Angry protest marches for the blasphemous film about Mohammed, "The innocence of Muslims," have been going on for three days and have targeted buildings and Christian institutions for revenge. As reported to Fides Agency by Fr. Samson Shukardin OFM, General Vicar of the Diocese and Director of the Diocesan Commission "Justice and Peace", "the situation is tense, and among Christians, there is great concern and fear. Today another march is expected. The radicals say they will not stop until the movie is banned from the site and the authors punished."

On Sunday afternoon, September 16, over 8,000 radical Muslims took to the streets shouting anti-Christian slogans, burning crosses, trying to attack Christian institutions. The crowd went close to St. Francis Xavier Catholic Cathedral, throwing stones and breaking the church windows, protected by a perimeter fence. From the upper floors of some nearby houses shots were fired at the Cathedral door which was locked. The faithful were not able to go to the 6 p.m. Mass. A nun and her driver, the lay Catholic Amir Masih, who wanted to enter the compound with a car, were stopped, threatened and shoved. The sister was terrified and in the chaos, the driver was wounded by a gunshot in the leg and is now in hospital.

"Yet all the leaders and followers of religious minorities, including the Bishop of Hyderabad, Mgr. Max John Rodrigues, participated in a demonstration of solidarity towards the Muslims in the city center, to condemn the blasphemous film" notes Fr. Shukardin. "Radicals - he explains - identify America as Christian and they take it out on us, a small minority in the country."

Yesterday, September 17, a protest march tried to force the gate of St. Elizabeth Catholic hospital. "But a large group of young Christians and Muslims, prevented this from happening, defending the hospital," says the concerned lay Catholic James Francis, administrator of the facility to Fides. "The police deployed two patrol officers near the hospital and many citizens defended us - refers Francis - preventing it from being violated and pillaged. The situation is now under control, thanks to the responsibility of the police and institutions," said the administrator. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 18/09/2012)