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ASIA/SYRIA - Christians form "popular committees" armed to prevent violence

Homs (Agenzia Fides) - The Christian communities in Syria, after repeated violence suffered by armed gangs, often jihadist groups, have begun to organize, in different locations, "popular dissuasive committees", formed by young armed Christians, who seek to prevent banditry and violence and defend their neighborhoods. Christian communities have suffered abuse, kidnapping, rape, murder, theft, violations of property in the "Valley of the Christians" (Western Syria), in the center of Aleppo, in the area of Damascus "Jaramana", in other villages such as Qusayr and Rableh (in the area of Homs). Despite repeated appeals of Syrian Bishops who have repeatedly urged the faithful not to "take up arms" and to "be patient", these defensive groups have begun to form especially within greek orthodox and Armenian communities, who "felt the need to defend themselves. " As sources of Fides in Syria explain, "it is not militia fighters or combatant groups, but only groups of guards who monitor and ensure the safety of Christian areas."
Meanwhile, the Syrian Catholic Archbishopric of Homs, in the al-Hamidiyah area, in the historic center of the city was set on fire. The Syrian Catholic Archbishop Georges Kassab, priests and faithful of the community have expressed their disdain to Fides "an unjustified act". On the night of September 13, report sources of Fides, a group of about ten unidentified militants broke into the building, closed and abandoned for months because of fighting between rebels and loyalist forces. Militants poured several cans of gasoline and then set it on fire, which seems "a revenge for unknown reasons." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 18/09/2012)

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