



## **ASIA - Catholic activist: "South Asia: a land of Christians persecution"**

Rome (Agenzia Fides) - "South Asia is an area of great Christian persecution, subject to the violence of radical Islamic Hindus or also Buddhists": This is what John Dayal, a lay Catholic Indian, human rights activist and collaborator of the Commission "Justice and Peace" of the Episcopal Conference of India says in an interview with Fides Agency. Speaking in Rome at the presentation of the "Report on Religious Freedom in the World", published by the Pontifical Foundation "Aid to the Church in Need," Dayal gives Fides a bleak analysis: "I have traveled a lot and studied South Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives. In each of these countries Christians are under pressure: they lack full freedom of religion or suffer discrimination and persecution. In Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and the Maldives, the danger is the militant Islamism. But in India and Nepal radical Hinduism is no exception and has strong connotations of religious intolerance and ethnic-religious cleansing. In Bhutan, Buddhism of the state does not allow other faith communities and in Sri Lanka fringe Buddhist radicals penalize Christians, even on an ethnic basis."

According to Dayal, "Hindu extremism in India is not to be underestimated at an international level, also because India is a nuclear power." "Violence, spreading hate, crimes against religious minorities - he continues - are on the rise and affect the Christian communities: the daily average is three crimes against Christians, especially in states like Orissa, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh. According to official figures, there are more than 6,000 cases of anti-Christian violence in the first decade of the twenty-first century. There are now thousands of displaced Christians and women victims of trafficking after the massacres of Kandhamal, in Orissa, in 2007 and 2008. ". Organizations which Dayal is part of, "All India Catholic Union" and "All India Christian Council", call on governments of the various Indian states and the federal government of India "to safeguard the constitutional guarantees for freedom of faith, fighting discrimination of caste or religion, " especially "eliminating the structural forms of persecution," that is to say the laws prohibiting conversion from one faith to another. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 16/10/2012)