



ASIA/PAKISTAN - Fr. Mendes: "Caritas volunteers and doctors are in danger because of the Taliban's fury"

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) - "All the volunteers, doctors, Caritas operators and NGOs are in danger and are potential victims of the Taliban": this is the alarm raised through Fides by Fr. Bonnie Mendis, a Pakistani priest, former Director of Caritas Asia, after numerous Taliban attacks, which took place yesterday and today, against doctors and volunteers who carried out the polio vaccine across the country. Fr. Mendes notes that Caritas Pakistan and other Christian churches carry out medical programs across the country, also in Peshawar and Quetta, a particularly dangerous city. "But the danger is now all over Punjab," he explains. "The Taliban are opposed to all forms of development and emancipation, and in this struggle, they also use and distort the Islamic religion. Education and health are two rights of man."

"We are really shocked for these anti-human actions, affecting people committed to saving lives," says to Fides the Dominican Fr. James Channan, director of the "Peace Center" in Lahore. "For some time the Taliban - said the Dominican - have been against vaccinations. They say this could be a sneaky way to identify and steal their DNA. And they are against any intervention that is, for them, a Western agenda. But it must be said that 98% of the Pakistani population is in favor of vaccines and also the National Parliament has confirmed it." Fr. James stresses that "through Caritas, the Church in Pakistan is very involved in health care programs, to show, in this way, Christ's compassion and love to all people who are sick or suffering." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 19/12/2012)