



ASIA/PAKISTAN - Budget of the Commission "Justice and Peace": nine places of worship destroyed in 2012

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) - Nine places of worship have been damaged, destroyed or looted in Pakistan in 2012. In the list there are five churches and three Hindu temples and a mosque of the Islamic sect of the Ahmadi, which are sacred spaces of religious minorities: this indicates a worrying trend of violence against minorities in the country. This is what the Commission "Justice and Peace" of the Episcopal Conference of Pakistan states, which discloses these data in a note sent to Fides Agency, reporting that 27 places of worship of religious minorities have been object of acts of vandalism in the past four years. The Commission also reports other cases of forced occupation of land destined as places of worship or existing spaces, as well as the murders of those engaged in the construction of places of worship.

In 2012, three churches in Sindh, one in Mardan and one in Faisalabad (in Punjab) have been attacked, Hindu temples were destroyed in Karachi and Peshawar, while a Ahmadi mosque was demolished in Kharian, in Punjab. The perpetrators of these acts are all "unidentified men", except for the Ahmadi place of worship, demolished by the Punjab Police.

The roots of these acts are in "a mix of lack of good governance, complicity and fear" by the state.

In fact, although the country's Constitution defends minorities and guarantees equal rights, prosecution is often weak when the places of worship of minorities are attacked.

According to lawyers, despite clear provisions in respect of criminal proceedings, there is weak law enforcement and lack of political will to protect the rights of minorities: this attitude generates impunity.

According to Peter Jacob, Director of the Commission "Justice and Peace", the attacks against minorities will only stop if Pakistan adopts a specific law on "violence against minorities," such as the one that exists for the protection of women. "It is the only way forward" says Jacob. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 21/12/2012)