



## **ASIA/PAKISTAN - Three Christians among those killed in the attacks in Baluchistan**

Quetta (Agenzia Fides) - Dismay, grief, fear, prayer: These are the feelings lived by the small Christian community in the province of Quetta, after the wave of terrorist attacks which yesterday, only in the city of Quetta, in the troubled province of Balochistan, caused 92 deaths and 155 injured. According to the claims of the terrorist group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, the community of Shiites and the Hazara ethnic group were targeted.

As reported to Fides Agency by Fr. Inayat Gill, OMI, pro-Vicar Apostolic of Quetta, among the victims in Quetta there are three Christians, who happened to be near the sites of the explosions, while some Christians are also among the injured. Two of the victims were Catholics and Fr. Maqsood Nazir, of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), pastor of the Sacred Heart Church in the city center, is today celebrating their funerals. Immediately after the explosion, the pastor went to the scene of the attack to give his help and is taking care of six wounded.

Fr. Inayat Gill explains to Fides: "The situation is tense, it is difficult to explain these tragic events. The reasons are many: sectarian and ethnic hatred, but not only. There is mafia of land grabbing, there are political claims: the certainty is that many innocent civilians die."

"As Christians - adds the pro-Vicar - we are a small minority, we live in danger, like other Muslim citizens, sharing their fate and their pain. Throughout the province of Quetta, there are about 70 thousand Christians, including 35 thousand Catholics. We are a very vulnerable community and the poorest. We have to be very careful. We cannot expose ourselves or actively participate in the celebrations of the three days of mourning, announced today by the authorities, otherwise we risk becoming a target for extremists: they would accuse us of being aligned with a faction in the ethnic conflict. We will pray for all the innocent victims in our churches continuing to give witness to our peaceful, quiet presence and close to the poor." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 11/01/2013)