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ASIA/SYRIA - Kidnappings, rapes, and trafficking of Syrian refugees

London (Agenzia Fides) - The conflict in Syria deteriorates and affects all Syrian citizens, regardless of ethnicity or religion. But, as in any war, the situation of minorities is the worst: the Christian minorities have become an easy target for criminals and terrorists who use kidnappings, rapes, and organize the trafficking of refugees. This is what is said in a note sent to Fides Agency by the non-governmental organization "Minority Rights Group" (MRG), with its headquarters in London, which each year draws up a detailed report on the condition of ethnic, religious, cultural minorities, throughout the world.
After an extensive survey conducted among refugee camps in Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and talks with Syrian refugees who arrived in Europe, the organization also denounced, in particular, the plight of the refugees of the Christian religion, giving voice "to a silent minority who tell harrowing stories of rapes, kidnappings and human trafficking."
As reported to Fides, the majority of refugees reached by the NGO "Minority Rights Group" express a desire to leave the Middle East and argues that, for this project, it has entered in contact with gangs of human traffickers. "There is today a thriving multi-million dollar business, developed around the refugee crisis in Syria," notes the NGO, telling some specific cases and trade put in place by the smugglers. A refugee was able to "buy a Swedish passport for $ 7,000," while in Lebanon a "mafia of false visas and false stamps," is being organized, which illicit organizations provide to refugees to enable them to continue their journey to Europe.
Also, in some parts of Syria – say some of the refugees who fled from Mesopotamia - "a Christian cannot report crimes or injustices any more. We are hostages of the growth of militant Islamism, and being a Christian is enough to be a target."
Assyrian and Syriac Christian refugees report that sectarian violence suffered by Christians in Deir Ezzor or Hassake, in Mesopotamia, after the arrival of the bands of rebels, remember cold-blooded murder, kidnapping and rape of Christian women. "Do they want to empty the Christians from Syria?" They wonder. Some priests of the Assyrian Christian community express "grave concern for the future of Christians in Syria, as many prefer to emigrate to escape the violence. His Beatitude Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, Patriarch of the Orthodox Syrian Church, said: "We do not want them to leave the country, but the important thing is that they live in peace and that God is with them, whatever they do and wherever they are." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 13/02/2013)

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