



## **ASIA/PAKISTAN - "Peace through dialogue": politics accept the negotiations with the Taliban**

Islamabad (Agenzia Fides) - The political parties of Pakistan, close to the general elections due at the end of March, officially ask the government in power and the future government to "begin talks with the Pakistani Taliban" following a path of "peace and reconciliation through dialogue." This is the result of a meeting held yesterday in Islamabad in which the various political representatives discussed a joint strategy to address the threat of terrorism in Pakistan. As reported to Fides, the politicians have decided to consider the olive branch "offered by Taliban groups. In recent weeks, in fact, the group "Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan" (TTP), an organization that brings together various groups of Islamic militants that have bases in northwestern Pakistan, has launched the offer of "talks with the Pakistani government" .

At a conference in Islamabad attended by the major parties, except "Jamaat-i-Islami" (JI) and "Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaaf" (PTI), that renounced for various reasons. Main objective was to "define a national policy that can bring peace to the country," said a representative of the Awami National Party (ANP), which convened the meeting. The new political leadership who will lead Pakistan in the years to come will have to have "an open mind" and develop a strategy to deal effectively with terrorism, which is seriously affecting the national economy and causing huge loss of life. It is estimated, in fact, that in the last decade there have been at least 30 thousand victims in terrorist attacks in Pakistan.

Speaking to Fides, Fr. Mario Rodrigues, Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in Pakistan, remains cautious on the subject: "Dialogue with the Taliban remains very difficult. What is vital, in fact, is to stop terrorist attacks on civilians, as seen from the chronicles and which continue. Christians and all religious minorities in Pakistan have suffered and continue to suffer from the Taliban violence, but this is a serious problem for the country and for the entire society, since even moderate Muslims are being targeted." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 15/02/2013)