



## **ASIA/INDIA - Terror attacks in Hyderabad, Christian defend local Muslims: "they are not terrorists"**

Hyderabad (Agenzia Fides) – No hasty conclusions, no labelling Muslims “terrorists”: the call comes from Indian lay Catholic church groups, following violence in Hyderabad, in India’s southern eastern state of Andhra Pradesh, which left 18 people dead and 119 injured. As police investigators track possible “trails of Islamic terrorist groups”, local Christians demand an enquiry which is serious and transparent, and urge all involved to be prudent, “not to demonise young Muslims living in the area”.

A memorandum addressed by local Christians to civil authorities in Andhra Pradesh, (a copy was received by Fides), said: “Now we can expect a wave of searching and arrests among young Muslims in our state. But in the past we saw careful investigation reveal that also extremist Hindu groups were responsible for terrorist attacks of this sort. In 2007, following three explosions in Hyderabad, a judge, for lack of evidence, declared not guilty 21 Muslim suspects. Government should avoid spreading stereotypes regarding Muslim citizens, belonging to our community. Hundreds of young innocent Muslims have been arrested, in violation of their rights, only to be released”.

Catholic groups such as the Catholic Secular Forum, stigmatise the voices of Hindu nationalists such as the Baratyā Janata Party (BJP) which accuse Muslims with no concrete proof, instigating public opinion to hatred. Local Christians denounce attempts to “polarise society in a religious sense”, recalling that, in the past, terrorists attacks operated by members of Hindu extremists often went unpunished, despite serious suspicions of complicity on the part of the police and bureaucracy. This in mind, local Christians urge local public opinion not to nurture prejudice towards the Muslim community. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 23/2/2013)