



ASIA/TURKEY - A Protestant Pastor expelled, another escaped an attack

Istanbul (Agenzia Fides) - The American Protestant Pastor Jeremiah Ian Mattix, who for over ten pastoral served in the Protestant church in Diyarbakir, was expelled from the country because accused of carrying out "illegal work." As learned by Fides, the Pastor for years had received the renewal of a "tourist visa" on his passport, and had continued his services in his church. In recent weeks, after undergoing scrutiny by two plainclothes, the Pastor was reported to the Immigration Office and charged with carrying out work illegally." The Turkish authorities decided to expel him to Turkey, condemning the Pastor and the church to pay a fine. The Pastor responded by saying that authorities and citizens of the region, "knew the services he carried out very well." The Protestant Church in Diyarbakir explained that Mattix had been sent by the Church in the United States in the absence of a Pastor to the community. Mattix served in a totally voluntary manner and did not receive any salary. The Church asks the government to allow "Christian religious officials" to stay in Turkey for worship, just as the imam living in Europe.

In another case reported to Fides by the Protestant Church in Izmit, the police arrested 14 suspects in the attempted assassination of the Protestant Turkish Pastor Emre Karaali. The group of terrorists who had infiltrated among the faithful of the Church in Izmit, were planning attacks against Christians in the month of January. Two of those arrested attended the meeting for more than a year, to become closer to the Pastor and his wife. The Association of Protestant Churches in Turkey reported at least a dozen incidents of intolerance towards Pastors and Christians in 2012, launching an appeal for the respect of human rights and religious freedom in Turkey. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 27/02/2013)