



## **ASIA/INDONESIA - Religious Minorities under attack, the indifference of the government: a new Report**

Jakarta (Agenzia Fides) - The Indonesian government fails to protect religious minorities in front of the growing religious intolerance and violence, which caused 264 attacks in 2012: says a new Report published by the NGO "Human Rights Watch" (HRW), entitled "In the name of religion", 107 pages, and sent to Fides Agency. The report calls on President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to adopt a policy of "zero tolerance" towards the repeated attacks against religious minorities that are poisoning society. Muslim gangs attack Christian churches and also "deviated sects", while the Indonesian government, the police and military "assist passively" and sometimes "actively participate" by defending the new extremist groups, denounces Human Rights Watch.

The report documents "the failure of the government", leading militant groups to become more aggressive because unpunished. The ahmadiy (considered Muslim heretics), Christians and Shiite Muslim communities are those who pay the price. According to a monitoring carried out by the NGO in 10 provinces, in 2012 there were 264 incidents of violence against religious minorities. In most of the attacks, the perpetrators and instigators went unpunished. In two cases, local officials refused to apply and enforce the decisions of the Supreme Court, which guaranteed minorities the right to build places of worship, and even the Minister of Religious Affairs, Suryadharma Ali - notes the text - released "discriminatory statements."

According to the HRW, "Yudhoyono should advocate to prosecute any violent attack against minorities, while he showed a substantial indifference." In addition, government officials and Indonesian security forces have often facilitated harassment and intimidation by militant groups against minorities. Among the most active extremist groups, we highlight the "Forum Umat Islam" ("Forum of the Islamic people") and the "Front Pembela Islam" ("Front of the Defenders of Islam"): they marry a Sunni interpretation of Islam that defines the non-Muslims as "infidels" and "blasphemous".

A serious erosion of religious freedom for Christians and other minorities stems from this context. Such erosion is justified and endorsed – which is the worst aspect, says the Report sent to Fides - also by public institutions such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Council for the monitoring of beliefs in society (under the auspices of the General Attorney) the Ulema Council, recognized by the state, who have used their authority to penalize religious minorities. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 05/03/2013)