



ASIA/IRAN - Earthquake in the Southeast: the Church expresses solidarity, Caritas ready for intervention

Tehran (Agenzia Fides) - "We express our solidarity and closeness to the affected families. As Catholic Church we are close to those who suffer," says to Fides Msg. Thomas Meram, Bishop of the Chaldean community of Urmia, in Iran, referring to the strong earthquake that yesterday, 16 April, hit southeastern Iran and the South West of Pakistan. Caritas Iran has contacted the Ministry of the Interior. As reported to Fides by Laurence Banapour, Secretary General of Caritas Iran, "the Ministry said that the damage is minor, only one victim and 12 wounded. The affected area, in fact, is not densely populated and there are a few scattered villages in the area. For now, the situation is under control and has asked humanitarian organizations, such as Caritas and the Red Cross, to wait. If they need help, as happened in other earthquakes in the past, they will call us and we can give our contribution, by organizing humanitarian aid." In the area there are Christian communities.

According to official sources, the earthquake has made a greater number of victims in Pakistan, where it hit populated areas: 35 victims in different parts of the province of Baluchistan, while 80 have been injured. In the district of Mashkel, in Baluchistan, more than a thousand houses have collapsed and the death toll could rise. Civil protection is engaged in relief and rescue. Fr. Renald Lawrence, OMI, a missionary in Quetta, capital of Baluchistan, told Fides: "The affected area is about 600km south of Quetta. There are many displaced people, we have been alerted for assistance. This morning we had a meeting to start humanitarian aid, in coordination with Caritas Pakistan." Here too, all the beneficiaries of assistance are all people of the Muslim faith. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 17/04/2013)