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ASIA/BANGLADESH - The ultimatum of the Islamists to the government: "Approve the law of blasphemy or we will siege Dhaka"

Dhaka (Agenzia Fides) – There is tension in Bangladesh between Islamist movements and the government. The group Hefazat-e-Islam (HeI) - which at the beginning of April had promoted a major demonstration - has launched an ultimatum to the government, intimating to approve the so-called "Document with 13 requests" - a kind of new blasphemy law - by 30 April. If this does not happen on May 5, the group will hold a new demonstration in the capital which has been called "a siege to Dhaka." The bill of 13 requests, offers, among other things, the death penalty for anyone found guilty of blasphemy toward the Islamic religion; it prevents women from working with men; prohibits all cultural activities that defame Islam; makes Islamic education compulsory. According to Fides sources, the HeI movement is organizing awareness meetings in different parts of the country to push the government to meet its demands. A de-legitimization of the executive is in progress, note sources of Fides, described as "enemy of Muslims," which "has no right to stay in power," accused of "giving shelter to anti-Islamic forces." "It will have to face terrible consequences if it continues to do so," the activists say openly. The movement Hefajat-e-Islam intends to "save Islam and humanity" and has also launched a campaign against bloggers deemed "atheists and blasphemers".
The challenge to the institutions worries religious minorities, such as Christians and Buddhists, that in past months suffered intimidation. His Exc. Mgr. Moses M. Costa, Bishop of Chittagong, told Fides: "In general, people have a spirit of harmony and peace in society. During this period, the question of sharia has leapt to public attention, but many Muslims themselves want a secular state. Only some groups strongly promote it. We as a small minority: are being accused of proselytizing and conversion. But we are so few, less than 1% in society, which is difficult to support such allegations. Despite all, we live faith with joy. The Church is appreciated by the government and by the people, for our works and our credibility. Many believe in us and thank us for our social and educational work. " (PA) (Agenzia Fides 26/04/2013)

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