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ASIA/MYANMAR - Archbishop of Yangon: "The Church architect of the dialogue to stop religious conflicts"

Yangon (Agenzia Fides) - "In the country there is tension and fear. Buddhist extremist groups feed hatred and communal violence against Muslims, but they are few. Some Buddhist monks have offered shelter to the victims and issued a statement of peace and reconciliation. The Church is committed to promoting dialogue and building harmony ": This is what the Archbishop of Yangon, the Salesian Charles Maung Bo says in a note sent to Fides, describing the commitment of the Catholic community to defuse tensions and sectarian violence that are worrying civil society and religious leaders in the country. An escalation of inter-religious violence, in fact "could wreak havoc for the entire country" and also trigger "terrorist attacks" by Muslim extremist groups, even putting at risk the difficult path of reforms undertaken in Myanmar. For this reason the healthy forces of civil society and religious communities are working hard to find solutions to the phenomenon: "The Catholic Church has issued statements for peace and reconciliation," says Mgr. Bo. "In the past five centuries we have cooperated with Buddhists and Muslims, without any conflict. We are doing everything possible to build bridges", he says, recounting that he had also contacted the embassies of foreign countries to seek support from the international community. "On June 27 - announces the Archbishop - a high level meeting will be held between religious leaders to discuss methods and appropriate ways to promote peace."
Tensions between Buddhists and Muslims started in Rakhine State, where there is a traditional presence of Muslims. According to the Archbishop, "many Muslim immigrants have arrived recently and the issue was initially a problem linked to the massive influx of immigrants", then degenerated into a conflict between different religious communities.
In Myanmar 75% of the population are Buddhists, around 4% Muslims, 8% Christians, the rest are followers of animist cults. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 24/06/2013)

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