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ASIA/SYRIA - The "Caliphate" of Saraqib, where Fr. Murad was killed

Idlib (Agenzia Fides) - The governorate of Idlib has become "the caliphate of Saraqib." The region of Idlib, in the northwest of Syria, between Aleppo and Hama, controlled by Islamist factions of the Syrian rebels, is the territory where the Latin Church of St. Anthony of Padua in Ghassanieh, in the village of Jisr el-Choughour, where the Syrian priest Fr. Francois Murad was killed. Currently, the city of Idlib, capital of the governorate, is in the hands of the regular Syrian army, but the surrounding area is controlled by rebel gangs, with strong infiltration of the jihadi group "Jabhat al-Nusra", which qualified sources of Fides Agency call "one of the most outrageously fundamentalist." These are those factions that have a single stated goal: to establish an Islamic "caliphate" in which there is a restrictive law that does not allow even the presence of "infidels" ("kafir"). "They have turned Islam into an ideology of ethnic cleansing," explains to Fides the social activist Farid, a Syrian Sunni Muslim of Idlib, who said he is "shocked and concerned about the situation: we are all afraid".
"It is a new edition of Islamic fundamentalism, the most restrictive in history", explains Farid. The Islamist groups have erected the town of Saraqib "capital of the caliphate", where an Emir was proclaimed and an Islamic court was also set up, the only competent court of jurisdiction for any dispute, which applies the sharia so slavishly as the only source of law. "The fact is that the supreme court judge is a lout man and in no way a man of learning, he was a factory worker and is joined by another judge who comes from Saudi Arabia," explains Farid.
"In this situation, inconceivable for the history and tradition of Syria, everything becomes possible. We live in an atmosphere of terror, in insecurity. It is possible for beheadings to occur - he explains - because for this ideology the infidel must be beheaded. For other minor offenses, the men’s limbs are mutilated, beaten or flogged. A fatwa is sufficient and any abuse of human rights becomes legal, especially on minorities such as Christians, Alawites, Ismaili, Shia, Druze, but also on the Sunni Muslims. The Islamists freely dispose of the life of religious minorities. The minorities are spared for 'clemency' only if they pay the jizya, the tax imposed by the Muslim majority". An untenable situation: "The Syrian civilian population - concludes Farid - cannot endure this atmosphere of fundamentalism, alien to our culture and our society," says Farid, launching a warning. "Where will we end up?" (PA) (Agenzia Fides 02/07/2013)

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