



ASIA/INDIA - Protests against the anti-conversion law increase in Madhya Pradesh

Bhopal (Agenzia Fides) - In the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh protests of religious minorities against the amendments to the anti-conversion law increase. The changes exacerbate the punishment on the prohibition of conversion and call into question the priests as "responsible" and therefore as recipients of the punishment (see Fides 09/07/2013). The amendments, already approved by the state government, led by the nationalist "Bharatiya Janata Party" must be passed by the State Parliament before becoming executive.

As reported to Fides by Fr. Anand Muttungal, a Catholic priest and member of the State Commission for Minorities in Madhya Pradesh, some Christian organizations such as "Isai Maha Sangh", other civil society organizations, in accordance with religious leaders and politicians, have drawn a common line of action. A "Joint Committee" will present a memorandum to the governor "for the defense of freedom of religion". Peaceful marches of protest will be organized throughout the state, while a group of lawyers and retired judges are looking at legal options to block the law.

Many organizations of different religious communities, such as "Buddhist Society of India", "Muslim Educational Society", "Rashtriya Secular Manch", "Catholic Kalyan Parishat", "Catholic Secular Forum", have joined forces to oppose the bill, starting a campaign to raise awareness among authorities and civil society organizations. The Christians, reports Fr. Muttungal, are organizing meetings to deepen the theme of freedom of religion. Some Hindu organizations support the bill, saying that "there are many conversions in the state," while others Hindus are aware that the bill "goes against the fundamental rights enshrined in the Indian Constitution".

Sujit William, president of the Christian ecumenical forum "Isai Maha Sangh" confirms to Fides "the great effort of unity in civil society to oppose the bill: adhesions are increasing day by day" (PA) (Agenzia Fides 18/07/2013)