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# ASIA/HOLY LAND - The Director of Caritas Jerusalem: the settlements and the Wall are mines on the peace process

Ramallah (Fides) - The resumption of the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians "is a positive thing, because the only way to solve problems is to negotiate". But the conditions in which it occurs are not open to too many expectations, because "there are too many obstacles to the solution of two peoples-two States, starting from the settlements that Israel continues to build in the Palestinian Territories".
The Palestinian priest Raed Abusahliah, general director of Caritas Jerusalem, reports to Fides Agency the widespread considerations among Arab Christians in the Holy Land compared to the new ongoing negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on the spur of the current U.S. administration. According to Fr. Raed the beginning of a negotiation is always good news, and "even the decision to ask for a deadline, nine months, to reach an agreement is appropriate". On the other hand, "the Palestinian side is weak: President Abu Mazen does not have the support of Hamas, and even some groups of the OLP challenge the basis on which one began to discuss". In particular, any excessive expectations on the outcome of further negotiations according to the Arabic priest is fatally contradicted by the facts on the policy pursued by the Israeli government. "I am afraid that the solution 2 peoples-2 States - explains Fr. Raed - is made impassable by the facts: within the Palestinian Territories there are already hundreds of settlements inhabited by thousands of settlers ideologically oriented and they continue to build new ones. Who has the power and the intention to convince them to leave? And then there is the Separation Wall that the Israelis are building and will try to propose as a new frontier, even if it does not correspond to the border established by the UN in 1967 and includes several Palestinian Territories. "
From the Churches and other religious communities point of view - said the director of Caritas Jerusalem "the agreement should protect the freedom of movement and access to the Holy Places which has incredibly decreased since the beginning of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. After the Oslo agreements, freedom of access to Holy Places is no longer guaranteed. Many cities, including Ramallah, are surrounded by checkpoints.
International guarantees for the implementation of any agreement are needed, especially with regard to the freedom of access to Holy Places". (GV) Agenzia Fides 31/07/2013).

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