



ASIA/INDIA - Kidnappings, forced conversions and violence against Christians

New Delhi (Agenzia Fides) - Several incidents of violence, harmful to religious freedom, have troubled the Christian communities in India in the last few days. Police in Chennai, in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, are looking for the parents of a 23-year-old girl, who was seized by them because contrary to her conversion to Christianity and to her desire to becoming a nun. According to what was reported to Fides Agency by sources in the local church, Lakshmi Priya, a young woman who graduated in engineering, belonging to a Hindu family residing in Hyderabad (in the state of Andhra Pradesh), had converted to Christianity and was preparing herself to becoming a nun, following a path of formation for religious life in Chennai, even without the consent of her parents. Her parents therefore resorted to the use of force to dissuade her.

Another violent incident occurred in Jharkhand, on August 19. A seven-year-old boy, who attended a Catholic school St. Francis Xavier, run by the Jesuits and nuns, died suddenly of cardiac arrest. After the event, a crowd attacked the priests and nuns of a Jesuit mission in Jharkhand, asking for a compensation of one million rupees. The Sisters of the Congregation of Mary Immaculate (CIC), who have been working in the school since 2005, were attacked by vandals who destroyed their convent. One of the priests who intervened, Fr. Salomon, suffered a head injury and is hospitalized. According to a statement sent to Fides, the Jesuits suspect that the attack was instigated by a group of Hindu fanatics.

A few days before, in the state of Rajasthan, the mother of a Christian Pastor was severely beaten by Hindu extremists who had threatened to kill her and cut her to pieces if she did not convert to Hinduism. The incident happened in Jaipur, Rajasthan, on August 13. Four armed men broke into Pastor Vishaal Behl's home, making sure he was not in the house, they began to ravage the house. They then threatened his mother, in an attempt to get her to reveal where her son was, they started beating her, causing her severe injuries to the head and arms. (PA)
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