



ASIA/INDIA - Violence against Christians: record in Karnataka state

Bangalore (Agenzia Fides) - The Indian state of Karnataka continues to be the center of attention for episodes of violence against Christian communities. After the cases reported in previous days by Fides Agency, there have been other incidents of blatant violation of religious freedom As reported to Fides by the "Global Council of Indian Christians", the victims are two Protestant Christians Pastors both converted from Hinduism: the converted seem to be, in particular, targeted by Hindu extremists. Pastor Samson, 33, for 10 years has led the cult in the "Yahweh Shalom Prayer House", a church in Basavanagar in northern Karnataka. Samson in past days, while he was in church , was taken and beaten by a group of 30 Hindu fundamentalists, who caused him serious injury to one eye and one ear, accusing him of carrying out "forced conversions". The police was warned but refused to accept a complaint against radical Hindus.

In a second incident, Pastor Devu Kanu Pale Gowli, who leads the "Blessing Ministry Church" in the district of Karvar was stopped by a group of radicals, who hit him and his wife, ordered him to reconvert to Hinduism. They then expelled them from the village and filed a complaint to the police for "forced conversions". The family was not even able to return to the village to take their belongings.

As Fides learned, Christian Churches in Karnataka appeal to the new state government, asking for a future of respect for human rights, dialogue, justice and harmony for Christians. In the elections in May in Karnataka, the Hindu extremist party "Bharatiya Janata Party" (BJP, "Indian People's Party") lost power and the majority went to the Congress party, which left a glimpse of hope for change.

According to a recent report by the NGO "Catholic Secular Forum", Karnataka is at the top in cases of inter-communal and inter-religious violence, with more than 1,000 attacks on Christians in 2011, an average of 3-5 attacks per day (PA) (Agenzia Fides 05/09/2013)