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ASIA/PAKISTAN – Christians: Prayer and protest after the bombs in the church of Peshawar

Peshawar (Agenzia Fides) - Prayer vigils in churches, protest in the streets, closure of schools and shops in mourning. This is how Pakistani Christians have expressed bitterness and shock after the explosion of two bombs in the Anglican Church of All Saints last Sunday in Peshawar. According to data sent to Fides, the updated toll reports 82 deaths, including 34 women and 7 children and 145 wounded.
As Fides learned, yesterday in major Pakistani cities like Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar, public processions of the faithful asked the authorities for increased security, underlining that they are "full citizens of Pakistan". In Karachi, much to the chagrin of religious leaders, scuffles broke out between Christians and Muslims outside a mosque and a man died. As reported to Fides, the Bishops have invited the faithful "to be patient, keep calm and not to transform, for any reason, disappointment in violence". In Islamabad, more than 600 protesters blocked a main road for several hours yesterday morning, while about 2,000 people gathered to protest slogans outside Parliament.
In Peshawar, site of the massacre, about 200 protesters took to the streets, blocking the main artery of the city, the Grand Trunk Road, while a group of 100 faithful began a protest outside the All Saints Church, calling for "justice and protection". The victims of the attack were buried in various cemeteries in the city, while the government of the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (of which Peshawar is the capital) has announced three days of mourning throughout the province. All educational institutions and Christian business activities were closed in mourning and prayer vigils were also held in Nowshera and Bannu, other cities of the province.
In Hyderabad, Sindh province (southern Pakistan) an ecumenical vigil of prayer was presided in St. Thomas cathedral by the Bishops Kaleem John (Anglican) and Maxi Rodrigues (Catholic): there were also many Muslims, who expressed sympathy and solidarity with the Christians. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 24/09/2013)

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