



ASIA/MYANMAR - The Church's appeal, after the religious conflicts: "In the new Myanmar there is no place for hatred"

Yangon (Agenzia Fides) - Religious conflict in Myanmar does not calm down. The phenomenon of Buddhists nationalist groups and radical Buddhist monks that feed anti-Muslim sentiments across the country causes more violence: a fresh wave of attacks caused the death of six Muslims and dozens of homes destroyed in a week near Thandwe, in the western part of the country, where the police have re-imposed a curfew.

Before the violence that shows no sign of ceasing, the Archbishop of Yangon, Charles Maung Bo, has renewed an appeal for peace, understanding among believers and mercy, as reported in a note sent to Fides Agency by Mgr. Bo. Speaking at a recent interfaith conference organized by the Buddhist Academy in Yangon, the Archbishop recalled: "Buddha preached a message of compassion that has a universal value. Christ announced the message 'Peace on Earth'. Gandhi, a convinced Hindu, was an apostle of non-violence". Appealing to all religious leaders, the Archbishop said that "in the new Myanmar there is no place for hate speeches". "The Almighty blessed our land. We can be a nation with an enviable development. But - continues the text sent to Fides - as a nation, we must stay away from hatred and violence". The Church warns against the possibility that Myanmar will become "a nation with chronic internal conflicts" that hamper the happiness of the citizens well-being. "We need to celebrate our unity in diversity: we are seven major tribes and 135 sub-tribes", says the Archbishop and concludes: "The relationship between the sons and daughters of our great nation is a fervent meeting for peace and harmony. There is need to send a strong signal to those who sow the seeds of discord. May our voice be strong and articulated. May peace flow like a river. Let the big dreams of a future Myanmar be built on justice, peace and brotherhood". The conflicts between Muslims and Buddhists remain sharp even in the Burmese state in Rakhine, on the border with Bangladesh. Last year, over 150 people were killed and more than 100,000 were forced to flee their homes. Most of the victims are Muslim Rohingya, an ethnic group of about a million people, not officially recognized in Myanmar and this is why they do not have citizenship. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 07/10/2013)