



ASIA/BANGLADESH - The Archbishop of Dhaka: "Messengers of hope among violence and social confusion"

Dhaka (Agenzia Fides) - The small minority of Bengali Christians "brings a message of hope among violence and confusion": is what the Archbishop of Dhaka, Msg. Patrick D' Rozario says in an interview with Fides Agency, describing the situation in the aftermath of the parliamentary elections on 5 January. "The social and political situation remains tense. As Christians, we did not experience any particular problem but a bomb hit a church in Dhaka, causing little damage and no casualties. Bengali Christian citizens live this difficult moment for the country with all the others, praying and hoping". The Archbishop explains: "The elections, with a low turnout and opposition boycott, were not a good sign for democracy: but the alternative was chaos and therefore, among the innumerable challenges and problems: there was no other choice", he continues.

"The danger of militant and radical Islamism - raised by observers - is real", says the Archbishop to Fides. "In recent months, radical Islamic organizations have raised their voice: we will see how the situation evolves. The Church's appeal is always one of peace and reconciliation for the country, which passes through a station of violence, disorder and instability. In this situation, our hope is that the new year brings prosperity and peace. As a small minority (Christians are 0.5% out of the 165 million people, ed), we continue to give our contribution especially in education, promoting values such as dialogue, respect, harmony, human dignity".

In the general election of January 5, the government party, the "Awami League" of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, obtained an absolute majority (according to non-official data: 105 seats out of 139), but only 22% voters participated in the vote: in fact the opposition - "the Bangladesh Nationalist Party" (BNP) and its allies, has called on the people to boycott the elections. Between 4 and January 5, 19 BNP activists were killed in clashes with police across the country.

Demonstrations asking for the resignation of the government have continued for four months. To exacerbate the crisis are the trials of some members of the Islamist party "Jamaat-e-Islami", an ally of the BNP, condemned by the Bengali justice for crimes related to the war of independence from Pakistan in 1971. The opposition accuses Hasina to continue the process with the sole purpose of undermining his political opponents. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 08/01/2014)