



## **ASIA/INDONESIA - Widespread religious violence in Indonesia**

Jakarta (Agenzia Fides) - Intolerance and violence on religious basis are increasingly common in the Indonesian territory: in 2013 there were 222 incidents of violence that took place in 20 provinces, 7 more compared to the 13 affected provinces in 2012. This was stated in a new Report by "Setara Institute", a study center based in Jakarta, which conducts research and awareness campaigns for democracy, human rights, religious freedom. In the new Report sent to Fides Agency, titled "Diversity is possible", the Institute notes that cases of religiously motivated violence are higher at a regional level.

The Institute notes that it is urgent to eliminate the causes of religious violence, pointing out that in the common mentality of the Indonesian people, citizens "accept and appreciate cultural, ethnic and religious diversity", that characterizes the nation. According to the Institute, "the increased use of violence is due to the slow and inadequate response of the government" that does not take serious measures to counter the Islamic fundamentalist groups.

As for the perpetrators of such violence, the well-known radical Muslim group "Islamic Defenders Front" (FPI) has been responsible for 16 accidents, while 14 violations have been attributed to the young people affiliated to the Indonesian "Ulema Council". Violence, the Report notes, has grown especially against Shite Muslims, but also against other minorities, such as Christians. In 2013 also the "Wahid Institute", another well-known research center, said that "religious intolerance remains a serious problem in Indonesia".

Faced with this situation, Indonesian civil society tries to launch positive messages: on January 5 over 130 thousand people, mostly teachers, educators, students, members of different religious communities, marched through the streets of the capital Jakarta, to reiterate the desire for religious tolerance and respect for human rights. The march celebrated the first national "Day for Religious Harmony", organized by the Federal Ministry of Religious Affairs. The special Day was celebrated with marches or cultural initiatives in 17 provinces of the archipelago.

Indonesia is the most populous Muslim country in the world, with 80% of Muslims out of more than 240 million inhabitants. Christians are about 11% . (PA) (Agenzia Fides 18/01/2014)