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ASIA/INDIA - Over 4,000 cases of anti-Christian violence: the "Report on persecution" presented to the Bishops

Mumbai (Agenzia Fides) - There are over 4,000 registered cases of anti-Christian violence in 2013, carried out mostly by Hindu extremist groups who are active in the country. The incidents include the murder of 7 faithful, including a minor; 1,000 women, 500 children and about 400 priests of different confessions suffered abuses and beatings; attacks against more than 100 churches and places of Christian worship. These are the figures in the new "Report on persecution in 2013" prepared by a forum of organizations and Christian organizations in the Indian civil society, and sent to Fides Agency.

The Report was presented recently to Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay and President of the Episcopal Conference of India. As reported to Fides, the document was drawn up thanks to the collaboration among the associations "Catholic Secular Forum" (CSF), "All India Christian Council", "Evangelical Fellowship of India", "Global Council of Indian Christians", "World Watch monitor". The Report was delivered to the Bishops by the two lay Catholics Joseph Dias and Judge Michael Saldanha, respectively Secretary and President of CSF.

Out of 4,000 incidents, described in detail in the text sent to Fides, over 200 are severe cases of persecution which occurred mainly in some states: especially in Karnataka where, despite the change of government, Christian persecution is widespread, and Maharashtra that "seems to be the next laboratory of Hindu extremism", notes the text. Other states in the "top ten" of persecutions are: Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Orissa , Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala.

The Report also examines the flaws in the Indian legal system, which allow the spread of violence and the impunity of the perpetrators. The laws "under fire" are the Presidential Order of 1950, which denies Dalit Christians and other minorities the rights granted to Hindu Dalits; the anti-conversion laws in force in seven Indian states like Orissa, Arunachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh.

The Report points out that a comprehensive law to stop violence, presented last year, has not yet been examined and discussed in Parliament. In most of the cases examined, "the police refuse to register complaints" and the Indian media fail to report the news or minimize it, the text concludes. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 23/01/2014)

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