



## **ASIA/LEBANON - The reduction of lands belonging to Christians continues**

Beirut (Agenzia Fides) - After the proclamation of independence of Lebanon, 8130 square km of land belonged to the Lebanese Christians. Today, however, Lebanese Christians have about 4 thousand km of land. These figures provided by Talal al-Doueihy, head of the Movement "Lebanese Land-Our Land Movement" are eloquent, with regards to some remarks reported by the The Daily Star newspaper. The drastic decrease in landed properties belonging to Christians in the Country of the Cedars has various causes, and is also connected with the strong emmigration tendencies that characterize the Christian portion of the Lebanese population. Many Christians wishing to emigrate, sell their land to Muslims buyers before leaving. In addition, during the years of the government of Rafiq Hariri - Prime Minister from 1992 to 1998 and then from 2000 to 2004, who was killed in a bloody suicide bombing on February 14, 2005 - the law regarding the sale of land which guaranteed the right of first refusal to owners of adjacent lands was canceled. The Hariri government wanted in this way to encourage investments in Lebanon from the Arab Gulf countries. The result is that almost all of the lands sold during those years increased from Christian owners to Muslim owners.

Several legislative proposals have been presented in parliament to try to block the erosion of the land ownership of Christians in Lebanon. The one presented by the MPs Sami Gemayel and Ibrahim Kanaan aims to regulate the ownership of land property in Lebanese territory by foreign buyers. While that prepared by the Parliamentary Joseph Maalouf aims to curb the change of ownership of plots of land above 3 thousand square meters, and to limit the room for maneuver of intermediaries in the sale of land. (GV) (Agenzia Fides 15/02/2014)