



## **ASIA/PAKISTAN - Terrorist groups settle in the Christian area of Essa Nagri in Karachi**

Karachi (Agenzia Fides) – There is violence and insecurity in Essa Nagri, a Christian neighborhood of Karachi, with a population of over 40 thousand people. The resident population, mostly poor Christians engaged in menial jobs or domestic work in wealthy Muslim families, have received threats from terrorists and extremist groups and live in fear. Already in the past, the local Christians had denounced violence (see Fides 17/09/2012). A Christian politician born in Essa Nagri, elected to the provincial parliament, had to leave the city because was seriously threatened after his speeches in defense of religious minorities.

But the situation deteriorated when terrorist organizations, banned in Pakistan, penetrated in the neighborhood and settled down in Essa Nagri. A local source of Fides launches the alarm: "Their criminal activities are intensifying by the day. And, to integrate into the life of the local community, the members of these organizations have started small businesses and opened shops".

Meanwhile, the local population sees an increase in the phenomenon of kidnapping of Christian girls, forced marriages and conversions to Islam. Criminal groups are also engaged in drug dealing to young Christians, becoming a source of social corruption.

Authorities and law enforcement agencies, however, do not take the complaints of the Christian population into consideration. The residents of Essa Nagri, with the help of the local parish priest, Fr. John Victor OFM, have built a wall to protect the area. However, days ago, during the night, a group of criminals demolished a piece of the wall, creating panic in the community. Peter Noman, an activist for human rights, denounces the threats received by the Christian community of Essa Nagri, who now live in a situation of uncertainty and panic. However, the police are absent. (KA-PA) (Agenzia Fides 03/07/2014)