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» 12/12/2008

PAKISTAN – INDIA

Pakistan bans Jamaat-ud-Dawa, arrests leaders

by Qaiser Felix

Islamabad complies with UN resolution describing the group as a front for the terrorists who carried out the Mumbai attacks. For Pakistan's Catholic Church both India and Pakistan are victims of terrorism and must work together and not succumb to jingoism.



Islamabad (AsiaNews) – Pakistan's government banned the Jamaat-ud-Dawa charity, arrested its top leaders, sealed its offices throughout the country, froze its bank accounts and banned its publications after the United Nations blacklisted the organisation for being a front for Lashkar-e-Taiba, an al-Qaeda-linked extremist group involved in the Mumbai attacks. TV stations also can no longer air statements by "banned groups".

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Although no official announcement about the banning of the organisation has been made, it is expected after a meeting of top security officials at the Foreign Office late in the night.

Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani "has taken note of the designation of certain individuals and entities by the UN under 1267 resolution of the UN Security Council and would fulfill its international obligations," a government statement said.

Police sealed Qudsia Mosque, Jamaat-ud-Dawa headquarters in Chauburji Chowk, Lahore, and 18 other offices throughout Punjab.

Weekly *Ghazwa* and monthly *Al-Dawa*, both published by the charity, have also apparently been closed.

Lashkar-e-Taiba founder and Jamaat-ud-Dawa leader Hafiz Mohammed Saeed has also been placed under house arrest. Police now surround his home.

Before his arrest Saeed said that the move was an attempt to target religious groups, and that his organisation would fight the decision in Pakistani and international courts, challenging Indian and US officials to produce evidence against it.

He claimed his group was not involved in the Mumbai attacks, adding that "[w]e do not accept terrorism, killing innocent people, or carrying out suicide attacks. [. . .] This has always been our stand."

The organisation runs hundreds of Islamic schools and health clinics (pictured, *Jamaat-ud-Dawa members handing out food*).

Following the Mumbai attacks in which 172 people were killed by ten Pakistani terrorists, Indian sources accused Pakistan of not doing enough to arrest possible accomplices.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, speaking in parliament before the latest steps were taken, called Pakistan "the epicentre of terrorism," and the latter's "infrastructure [. . .] has to be dismantled permanently." India, he insisted, "could not be satisfied with mere assurances."

India and Pakistan "need to work hard and resolve this issue wisely," said in a statement the National Commission for Justice and Peace of the Catholic Church of Pakistan.

None the less, if it "s true that terrorists have enjoyed impunity and



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developed their root very deep in Pakistan,” it is also true that “Pakistan itself is victim of this terrorism.” In fact, in Pakistan authorities are hard pressed to hold on to entire regions “like the Swat Valley, for years the scene of military clashes.”

Similarly, for a long time India too “has been facing home-grown terrorism [. . .] in Assam, Orissa, Rajasthan, and Punjab among others”.

In “order to eradicate the roots of terrorism from South Asia, both countries will have to make joint efforts.,” for this reason, “this is not the time to succumb to any kind of jingoism.”

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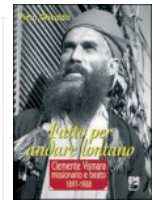
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During the Angelus, Francis

prayed for the victims of today's church massacres in Pakistan. Before the Marian prayer, he said that God "loves us, really love us, and loves us very much! This is simplest expression that sums up the whole Gospel, faith, and theology. God loves us freely and boundlessly." The pontiff also spoke about typhoon victims in Vanuatu. "I pray for the



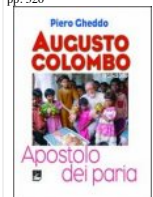
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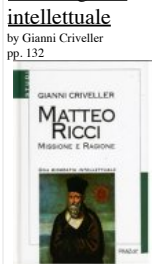
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