

# Catholic, Protestant bishops lead aid convoy to Pakistani flood victims

MULTAN, Pakistan – A Pakistani Catholic bishop and his Protestant counterpart led a convoy of food and bottled water to southern Punjab province, where five districts are submerged under floodwaters.

The Asian church news agency UCA News reported that Bishop Andrew Francis of Multan and Anglican Bishop Alexander Malik of Lahore began their trip Aug. 26 with a prayer at the Cathedral of the Holy Redeemer, Multan, before traveling more than 100 miles south to a camp for survivors in Khan Bela. Federal Minister for Minorities Shahbaz Bhatti also joined the convoy with an additional six trucks of relief items.

“This is our diocese. We have seen death with our own eyes in visits to flood-hit areas,” Bishop Francis told flood victims on their arrival. “We came through these deadly waters to bring you food and show you that we care.”

“We are all Pakistanis and stand together amid this crisis,” Bishop Malik said.

The two bishops then went among the many tents to give out relief packages to survivors.

Several survivors shared harrowing stories of personal loss, reported UCA News.

Muhammad Ashraf lost his 18-year-old son.

“He was returning from work when a giant wave took him. A woman saw him struggling in the water, but he quickly disappeared,” Ashraf said.

Bishop Francis told a group of young children, “Do not be afraid, thank God you are saved.”

Earlier, Caritas Pakistan officials from Multan provided treatment for the sick at an aid station and managed to distribute tents to survivors cut off by 10-foot-high

floodwaters.

“We are coordinating our work with the army. Soldiers are helping us access areas where relief is most needed,” said Izhaque Bulanda, the agency’s disaster management coordinator in Multan.