



VATICAN - Archbishop Tomasi: "nearly 70 percent of the world's 6.8 billion people live in countries with high restrictions on religion, the brunt of which often falls on religious minorities"

Geneva (Agenzia Fides) - "In a number of countries freedom of religion is not yet fully guaranteed. Recent surveys indicate that nearly 70 percent of the world's 6.8 billion people live in countries with high restrictions on religion, the brunt of which often falls on religious minorities." These were the words of Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, Permanent Representative of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the General Debate Item 3 of the 13th Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, on March 12, 2010

The Archbishop denounced the fact that the rights of religious minorities "seriously violated, their freedom of worship hampered. In some regions, "n some regions followers of minority religions, that are not recognized by law, have to confess their faith in hiding and illegally, in fear of prison terms and persecution. In other places, while the right to freedom of religion is legally recognized, religious minorities are harassed and persecuted by members of the majority religion. Their properties are damaged, their houses of worship are destroyed, their lives severely threatened. These criminal acts are often committed in total impunity."

Archbishop Tomasi also mentioned that the authorities look on without doing nothing and or are partisans in the conflict, so "victims are forced to desist from reporting the injustice done to them for fear of further negative repercussions," while the perpetrators "feel encouraged by the silent collusion of State authorities and by a judicial system that is ineffective or partial. The limitation clauses in international instruments should not be used in a disproportionate manner to strike at the rights of religious and ethnic minorities and political opponents but only to protect and promote the human rights of all."

The Representative of the Holy See then made an invitation to all countries to "respect and promote the right to freedom of religion in all its aspects, through national legislation, including appropriate sanctions against violators to eradicate impunity effectively." The State, in fact, has the responsibility of protecting the fundamental human rights of all people in their own land. "As long as the State is not able or willing to provide effective legal protection for all its citizens, the continuous persecution of ethnic and religious minority communities will continue to afflict the world and to weaken the human rights of everyone." (SL) (Agenzia Fides 13/03/2010)

> LINKS

Complete text of Archbishop Tomasi's talk, in English: http://www.fides.org/eng/documents/Tomasi_13032010.doc: