



## **AMERICA/BOLIVIA - "True democracy is not built on death": Bishops' appeal on lynchings and violence in the country**

La Paz (Agenzia Fides) – "Life, a sacred gift of God" is the title of the statement that was read during a press conference by Bishop Oscar Aparicio, Auxiliary Bishop of La Paz and Secretary General of the Bolivian Bishops' Conference (CEB), on the tragic phenomenon of lynchings in various parts the country, which occur with a frequency that is of great concern for the Church. The most recent episode took place a week ago, when three brothers died after being buried alive in a village near the city of Cochabamba, on charges of murdering a neighbor.

"For some time these crimes have been occurring, but in recent years they have increased in number and the characteristics of the violence have become more brutal and inhumane, being justified with untenable arguments," reads the text. It continues: "What is even more worrisome is the fact that the authorities responsible for law enforcement and defense of the rights of citizens, cannot adequately prevent or punish the perpetrators of such acts."

The Bishops continue: "It is important to note that these cases are also due to a misunderstanding of so-called 'community justice', perhaps fueled by ambiguity in the existing legislation, which does not regulate the scope of applications and responsibilities and which offers protection to many of the perpetrators of these crimes."

The text reaffirms the validity of Christian principles: "True democracy is not built on death. We need to find alternatives for rehabilitation of people who commit serious crimes, but never eliminating them. That is not ethical and not human, much less Christian."

At the end of the press statement, the Bishops launch an appeal to the Christian community and the authorities: "As the Catholic Church, we ask all Bolivians to banish once and forever from our country these inhumane practices, to rediscover the true human and Christian values that are born of faith in the God of life and love. We call on the responsible civil and police organizations, to do all they can and to urgently take all necessary measures to banish this scourge." The document is signed by the Secretary General of the Bolivian Bishops' Conference, dated September 22, in La Paz.

This past June 15, Fides was informed of the Bishop of Oruro's denunciation of this situation and of the indifference with which it was met by the authorities. Bishop Bialasik mentioned that "it is possible that government and institutions in society can accept these actions. An urgent effort is needed to prevent these kinds of events, to keep Bolivian families from having to shed any more tears." (CE) (Agenzia Fides 23/09/2010)

### > LINKS

*Bishops' Statement (in Spanish):* [http://www.fides.org/spa/documents/Comunicado\\_obispos\\_bolivia22092010.doc](http://www.fides.org/spa/documents/Comunicado_obispos_bolivia22092010.doc):