



AMERICA/EL SALVADOR - Prison conditions and respect for human rights among the Church's concerns

San Salvador (Agenzia Fides) - The Catholic Church expresses its concern at the situation in the prisons of El Salvador and draws attention to the report prepared by the "Committee on the Rights of Persons Deprived of Liberty" (connected to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, IACHR), which has revealed "severe structural weaknesses" and a 300% overcrowding in the prison system.

"I want to express my concern for the plight of our country's prisons, the overcrowding of prisoners, and the terrible situation of isolationism," said the Archbishop of San Salvador, Archbishop José Luis Escobar Alas, in his regular press conference on Sunday. "I am pleased that the OAS has taken action this time," said the Archbishop, referring to the assessment of the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR), an autonomous agency of the Organization of American States (OAS).

"I hope that our authorities are willing to listen to this concern of the OAS, which is presented as an opportunity for countries which are friends of America, members of the OAS, to help us in one way or another, to resolve this problem," said the Archbishop. "I maintain the belief that these prisoners need to be treated in a humane and dignified manner, and I think it is unfair that those who committed a crime should only receive 'pain and suffering'. There are elderly prisoners who are no longer a danger to society and it does not make sense to keep them in jail."

This same problem is also present in other Latin American countries, not only in El Salvador. According to reports by agencies, according to the official figures presented in the report, the adult prisons in El Salvador have registered an overcrowding that exceeds 300%, while 45% of inmates in facilities for young people are over 18 years old. Official figures indicate that the prison system has 23,840 prisoners in 23 facilities, designed for a population of 8,110 inmates maximum. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 11/10/2010)