



AFRICA/SUDAN - Bishops appeal for respect for Sudanese rights

Khartoum (Agenzia Fides) – The bishops of Sudan have called on members of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) and the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) to continue to support the rights of the people of Southern Sudan and the regions of Abyei, the Nuba Mountains, Southern Kordofan, and Blue Nile. On January 9, 2011, there will be two referendums: one on southern Sudan and another on the Abyei region, disputed between north and south Sudan.

The appeal was presented with a document (sent to Fides) during the visit to the Plenary Assembly of the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference (SCBC) (being held in Rumbek from November 8 to 15) of a joint delegation of AMECEA and SECAM (see Fides 11/11/2010).

It noted that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed in Nairobi (Kenya) in 2005, was intended to overcome the causes of the twenty-year civil war between north and south Sudan: “The failure to achieve a national identity and the unity of Sudan that guarantees and protects the fundamental rights of the multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society of the Sudan. The highly centralized system of government controlled by small ethnic group which has imposed its system of administration on the whole country through islamization of the laws, institutions and political systems.”

“All indications are that national unity has not been made attractive to the people of Southern Sudan. At the same time, the root-causes of the conflicts have not been addressed. The leadership of Sudan and the political establishment bear a great responsibility for this tragic situation. A unity which binds and oppresses, prohibits all forms of opposition, a unity which imposes uniformity and condemns those who differ in faith and culture must be rejected,” write the Sudanese Bishops.

According to the Sudanese Bishops' Conference, other parts of the CPA have not been implemented. The bishops also point out that while the people of Abyei will decide whether to belong to north or south Sudan, the populations of other disputed areas between north and south (the Nuba Mountains, Southern Kordofan, and Blue Nile) cannot decide their fate.

“The failure to offer the people of these areas the chance to determine their own future could lead to instability and violence which could soon draw in the rest of the country and spread to another full scale civil war in the Sudan. This would inevitably have devastating effects to the neighbouring countries and the region including, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, DRC Congo, Central African Republic, Chad, Libya, Egypt and beyond.”

The Sudanese bishops ask the representatives of AMECEA and SECAM to place pressure on their governments to ensure that: the two referendums on southern Sudan and Abyei be held regularly, that they comply with the choices expressed by the people, and that minorities in south and north Sudan be recognized and protected. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 13/11/2010)

> LINKS

Appeal of the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference (SCBC) to Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) and Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) (in English):

[http://www.fides.org/eng/documents/SCBC Appeal to AMECEA and SECAM Final 10th November 2010.doc](http://www.fides.org/eng/documents/SCBC%20Appeal%20to%20AMECEA%20and%20SECAM%20Final%2010th%20November%202010.doc)