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AFRICA/SWAZILAND-"In Swaziland a brutal and undemocratic regime": the alarm of the Bishops in Southern Africa

Mbabane (Agenzia Fides) - "Swaziland is a country in turmoil, a country tearing itself apart from the inside by the actions of the uncaring state of head and a regime that is getting more brutal by the day". It is the cry of an alarm raised by Cardinal Wilfrid Napier, Archbishop of Durban and spokesman of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC, which includes the Bishops of South Africa, Swaziland and Botswana) in a statement sent to Fides.
The statement was issued after a visit to Swaziland by SACBC delegation comprising of Cardinal Napier; Archbishop Buti Tlhagale, Archbishop of Johannesburg and President of the SACBC; Archbishop Barry Wood, Auxiliary Bishop of Durban and Archbishop Joseph Sandri, Bishop of Witbank.
Swaziland is currently under a state of emergency that was "imposed – recalls Cardinal Napier – on April 12, 1973, when King Sobhuza II usurped all legislative, administrative and judicial powers by royal decree. By that decree supreme authority was vested solely in the institution of the Monarchy in the person of the King. All political parties and indeed all political activities were banned".
Despite having a Constitution that supposedly guarantees the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the fact that the decree of 1973 is also included in the Constitution "deprives citizens of their fundamental rights: to expression, assembly and association ". "This - argues Cardinal Napier - makes Swaziland a police state in which political parties remain banned".
Among the events that show the serious violations of human rights, Cardinal Napier, cites the violent suppression of protest on April 12 this year, the death " in mysterious circumstances " of two activists detained by the authorities, the Anti-Terrorism Act in 2008 " used by the government to silence its critics".
Cardinal Napier also points out that Swaziland faces a serious social and economic crisis: it has the highest HIV / AIDS infection rates in the world (26% of the population), the lowest life expectancy in the world (32 years), an unemployment rate of 40%, 70% of its population lives below the poverty line, which is set at under $ 6 a day.
The Bishops of Southern Africa therefore launch an appeal to the African Union and Southern African Development Community (SADC) so "they examine critically and honestly whether the Constitution of Swaziland meets the requirements of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and whether the election process conforms to the SADC Protocol on elections. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 06/10/2011)

> LINKS
The Declaration of Cardinal Napier (in English):
http://www.fides.org/eng/documents/11-06-09_WFN_Turmoil_in_Swaziland.pdf:

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