



AMERICA/VENEZUELA-"Cause for shame and mourning" the situation in prisons after the recent armed clashes that resulted in deaths and injuries

Caracas (Agenzia Fides) - The horrific acts of violence which took place in the last few days in Venezuela's prisons – particularly in the Internado Judicial Capital El Rodeo I in Guatire, in the state of Miranda - of which still today the exact number of deaths is not known, have led the Bishops of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Episcopal Conference of Venezuela (ECV) to publish a document on the situation of prisons, of which a copy was sent to Fides by Caritas Venezuela. The document reports 37 deaths and dozens seriously injured, according to unofficial figures gathered by the families of prisoners.

The text denounces: "These facts where inmates clash with each other and against state security forces using firearms, confirms in such an outrageous and shameful way what has been reported continuously and for many years: the state authorities in Venezuela not only violate the constitutional mandate sanctioned in Article 272 of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, but they have completely abandoned their responsibility to safeguard the lives and physical integrity of people detained and punished with imprisonment, to allow the bold and open action of internal mafias and gangs, who exercise absolute control within the premises of the prison inmates and, even with the use of weapons, with the complicity of the authorities of the country".

The bishops speak of responsibility and indifference of the state that is lived at the institutional level, as one reads further on: "The authority of the Venezuelan state cannot abdicate its authority in any way from its obligations as far as the rights and guarantees of inmates in prisons are concerned, and in no way should be regarded with indifference or as something normal that in the prisons of Venezuela not only there is overcrowding, corruption, lack of basic services, procedural delays and lack of registration of the prison population, but also that the state allows criminal gangs and mafias to impose their law within prisons. This is a very serious situation, with consequences that the authorities cannot avoid".

In the text, signed by the President of the Justice and Peace Commission and Vice-President of the ECV, His Exc. Mgr. Roberto Luckert Leon, Archbishop of Koro, the bishops express their solidarity with the prisoners and their families. The text concludes that the current situation in the prisons of Venezuela "does not cease to be for the Venezuelan State and for our entire society in general, a source of shame and mourning".

The document is dated June 16, because the facts to which it refers occurred in the previous weekend (June 11 and 12), but unfortunately the news spread by the agencies and the local press reported other violent armed clashes occurred in the last hours, with numerous deaths and injuries, always in the area of Miranda a El Rodeo. (EC) (Agenzia Fides 18/06/2011)

> LINKS

The Bishops' document (in Spanish)::

http://www.fides.org/spa/documents/RespetoDerechosHumanos_venezuela062011.doc: