



## **AMERICA/MEXICO-"Even the children begin to take up arms" Mgr. Vera Lopez denounces the recruitment of minors on behalf of organized crime**

Saltillo (Fides Service) - Between 14 and 15 000 members of the youth gangs of Saltillo are incorporated in organized crime and have become a serious threat to the population: the alarm has been launched by the Bishop of the Mexican diocese of Saltillo, Mgr. Raul Vera Lopez, in a meeting with the local press. The Bishop said that during the recent March for Peace (see Fides 05/07/2011) information and numbers were publicized: for example, about 70 000 young people are organized in gangs, "and 20 percent of the 70 000 gang members – he underlined- that is to say about 14/15 thousand young people, who are members of gangs in the state capital, have already been recruited by organized crime".

According to the Public Safety Commission of the Chamber of Deputies, at least 23 000 young people are recruited by criminal organizations throughout the country, as reported in the local press. "It is just like countries where there is militarization for a Civil War, brought to such an extent that even the children begin to take up arms" denounced Mgr. Vera Lopez, who has asked President Felipe Calderon to change strategy in the war lead against organized crime.

"During the March for Peace, before reaching Mexico City, on June 8, a person who works in the neighborhood of Saltillo with 70,000 children who are organized in gangs, reported that 20 percent of them have already been recruited by drug cartels. So – continued the bishop - that number of 23 000 young people recruited by organized crime in Mexico that the Chamber of Deputies is giving is seeing the world through rose-colored glasses" . Mgr. Vera has acknowledged the seriousness of the situation, together with the news of "child killers", now identified in some parts of the country. (EC) (Agenzia Fides 21/06/2011)