



ASIA/NORTH KOREA - A UN survey for crimes against humanity in North Korea, "would be a gesture of charity to the people," says the Church

Seoul (Agenzia Fides) – An official UN investigation on crimes against humanity which are committed in North Korea is required: this is what more than 40 organizations working on human rights and legality worldwide, have gathered in Tokyo today with the aim of forming a coalition of civil society and start a campaign, putting pressure on the United Nations. The proposal is reported by Fides sources present at the conference, attended by organizations from across Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America, including Amnesty International, "International Federation for Human Rights" (FIDH), Human Rights Watch (HRW), "Open North Korea", "International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), and Christian-based organizations such as " Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW).

The organizations emphasize the presence of " prison camps and re-education" popular in North Korea, where according to some sources, over 200 thousand North Korean citizens are locked away, subjected to torture and cruel and inhuman conditions. The political dissidents and their families, often held for life, suffer hunger and forced labor.

Mgr. Peter Kang, Bishop of Cheju and President of the Episcopal Conference of South Korea, is in favor of the initiative and says to Fides: "The UN, with its authority, is the only organ for an investigation of this kind. It would be a gesture of charity toward the North Korean people, oppressed by a dictatorial regime, and it would be the only chance and hope of life offered to all those who suffer and die in prison camps in the North", among which there are prisoners also held for conscience and religion reasons.

"We are very concerned about human rights violations and crimes against North Koreans – explains the Bishop - but we want to keep channels of dialogue and humanitarian aid open to keep the hope of reconciliation and rebirth of Christian faith in the North alive".

As reported to Fides, His Exc. Mgr. Iginus Kim Hee-jong, Archbishop of Kwanju, will visit North Korea next September 21, and will lead a delegation of seven religious leaders, members of the Korean "Conference of Religions for Peace"(KCRP), of which the Archbishop is President, with the aim of " re-opening a path of dialogue and peace. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 08/09/2011)