



AMERICA/BOLIVIA - The participants dispersed by the police in the march for ITNPIS; for the Bishops "violence denies the dignity of persons"

La Paz (Agenzia Fides) - The Bolivian Church is deeply saddened because of the violence exercised by the police against the participants in the march in defense of the indigenous territory National Park Isiboro Secure, ITNPIS (see Fides 26/08/2011; 30/08/2011; 20/09/2011; 23/09/2011), thus closing the door to any possible dialogue to resolve the issue peacefully. His Exc. Mgr. Oscar Aparicio, auxiliary Bishop of La Paz and the Secretary General of the Episcopal Conference of Bolivia, read the Bishops' public statement, entitled "Violence denies the dignity of persons", which was sent to Fides and states: "We condemn the actions of intervention and repression against the brothers of the march, who according to information received directly from our pastoral operators in the area and the versions provided by the media, occurred when they were completely helpless".

The intervention of the police, who stopped the march and violently dispersed the participants, occurred on Sunday evening, Sept. 25, near the village of Yucumo, about 300 kilometers from La Paz, which was the final destination. In this area, protesters were blocked by the inhabitants of Yucumo and other groups who opposed to the march, giving rise to confrontations and violence. The march had begun on August 17, involving about 1,500 natives.

The Bishops, complaining about the events that occurred, however, urged the authorities to guarantee the rights of the indigenous population, as read in the statement: "At the same time when we are saddened by the death of another child, the number of injuries, for the situation of those who were arrested and about the fate of dispersed people, we urge the authorities to ensure the fundamental rights of these people. In the name of God, Father of all and Lord of Life, we urge the authorities to abandon the path of repression, persecution and violence that does not solve problems and to demonstrate with consistent actions, with the attitude of listening and defending the rights of the Bolivians, in particular the poorest and most vulnerable. Honest dialogue is the only way to ensure peaceful and lasting solutions for the good of all", concludes the Bishops' statement.

According to information from the local press, labor unions protested for this repression taking to the streets in cities around the country. The Bolivian government delegation is currently in Washington for several international meetings and was received by the Secretary General of the OAS (Organization of American States), José Miguel Insulza, to explain the reasons for the police's intervention: the intervention was justified by the need to defend the life and integrity of citizens due to the clash between the participants in the march and the Yucumo population. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 27/09/2011)