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AMERICA/BOLIVIA -Itnpis: the road will not be done, the Church: "We were witnesses of solidarity and commitment to the cause of the indigenous people"

La Paz (Agenzia Fides) - After 65 days since the beginning of the indigenous march and confrontation with the government, President Morales has decided not only the definitive suspension of the construction of the second part of the road that had to go from Villa Tunari to San Ignacio de Moxos, but has also declared by law the inviolability of the Indigenous Territory National Park Isiboro Secure (ITNPIS).
The Catholic Church, right from the beginning, had offered its mediation to establish dialogue between the parties in conflict. (See Fides 20/09/2011). The President's decision to prohibit all construction in the area of ITNPIS is a victory for the protesters. The request of intangibility of the area was the main demand made by indigenous leaders, and after the intervention of the police in Yucumo they were informed about President Morales' decision to consult local residents before any work in that stretch of highway were carried out.
At the beginning of the march, the government qualified the indigenous event as illegitimate, and a few days later in Yucumo, the march was blocked by the locals and then repressed by the police (see Fides 27/09/2011).
The Catholic Church has always been present along with the demonstrators with lay and religious representatives and offered material assistance to the participants in the march. These in fact were without food and water and suitable clothing to withstand the harsh temperatures of the height of the area near La Paz. (See Fides 05/10/2011)
Upon arrival in the Bolivian capital, the march became a complete citizen demonstration with nearly 500 000 people who joined the protesters in the last meters to the city's cathedral. Mgr. Edmundo Luis Flavio Abastoflor Montero, Archbishop of La Paz welcomed the protesters and celebrated the Eucharist with them. In his homily, the Archbishop said that God is present among simple people and that we need to enforce the rights of everyone with regards to justice and respect for the common good.
Yesterday, October 24, the Commission for the Social Pastoral of Caritas of Bolivia issued a statement in which it expressed " joy for the great witness of Christian and cultural value of the community's solidarity of La Paz and the Bolivian society, with eloquent demonstrations of humanitarian assistance and commitment to the cause of indigenous peoples of the plains. We have witnessed attitudes of love, emotion, sincere hospitality and acts of service with the sharing of food and clothing to support the rights of indigenous peoples and the defense of ITNPIS. These are all gestures and signs of Christian evangelization". (CE) (Agenzia Fides 25/10/2011)

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