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ASIA/NORTH KOREA - Kim Jong-un has announced an amnesty, the NGOs ask for "a new era for human rights"

Seoul (Agenzia Fides) - The new North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has announced an amnesty on the occasion of the anniversary of the two leaders who paased away, his father Kim Jong-il and his grandfather Kim Il-sung. But, according to a coalition of NGOs, rather than a symbolic gesture " a new era for the full respect of human rights in the country is urgently needed". While it was not clear how many and which prisoners the measure will concern, announced for 1 February by the regime of Pyongyang, more than 40 NGO's of the "International Coalition to stop the crimes against humanity in North Korea" (ICNK) wrote an open letter to leader Kim Jong-un inviting him to "abandon the decades-long pattern of human rights abuses committed by the government of Pyongyang against the people in North Korea".
The letter, which was sent to Fides, recalls that in the country more than 200,000 men, women and children are detained for political reasons in a system of prison camps. The citizens- the text continues- live in fear that a small lack of loyalty to the regime leads to interrogations, arbitrary detention, disappearances, torture or death. "The population suffers from hunger and malnutrition, lack of health care, while a political elite lives in luxury", remarks the text of the NGO.
The letter urges Kim Jong-un to enforce the rights enshrined in international treaties that North Korea signed, granting access to human rights observers, including representatives of the UN and Red Cross. According to activists of the Coalition, "Kim Jong-un has the opportunity to be remembered as the leader who restored freedom to the people. He could lead his country out of isolation and ensure peace and security on the Korean peninsula. But he may do so only by respecting the fundamental human rights of North Korean people".
Some big and important NGOs are part of the Coalition such as "Amnesty International", "Human Rights Watch" and the "International Federation for Human Rights" (FIDH), and associations of Christian inspiration such as "Christian Solidarity Worldwide", "Jubilee Campaign", " Christian Federation of Lawyers". (PA) (Agenzia Fides 10/01/2012)

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