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ASIA/MYANMAR - Discrimination against the Rohingya ethnic group continues: approximately 40 000 children are not registered at the registry office

Yangon (Agenzia Fides) - There are approximately 40 000 children belonging to ethnic Rohingya who currently live in Myanmar without being registered at the registry office. This results in limited opportunities for them to access to employment, food and health services. This is one of the many ethnic minorities that make up Myanmar and find themselves in an isolated region on the border with Bangladesh. They are mostly of Muslim religion and it is estimated that their population amounts to about three million people. Despite recent reforms in the country, the Government has reconfirmed its profoundly discriminatory policies against this ethnic group and the minors pay the consequences. According to the responsibles of the Proyecto Arakan, the problem is directly related with the failure to make concessions and authorizations for marriage both with the 'politics of the children' imposed by the Burmese government. On the one hand, children who are not registered are proof of the existence of marriages which are not authorized by the State, 'crime' that is pursued with 10 years in prison. On the other hand, the third or fourth child who are not registered fall into a 'black list' for life that prevents them from finding work, study or to get married. According to the Ley sobre Ciudadana of 1982, Rohingya children, registered or not, are categorized as 'stateless', and have limited access to food and medical care. Most cannot attend school and are exploited for forced labor. The illiteracy rate is about 80% and over 60% of children aged between 5 and 17 have never been to school. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 25/01/2012)

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