



ASIA/MYANMAR-Reconciliation with ethnic minorities, but investigations concerning abuse are "premature"

Yangon (Agenzia Fides) - The Myanmar government has officially expressed its intention to launch full reconciliation with ethnic minorities, but the newly formed "National Commission on Human Rights" (NHRC) is not investigating, for now, on violations concerning human rights in conflicts, a step considered "premature". Fides sources in Burma note that "the process of reconciliation will be long and difficult, but the will expressed by the government gives us hope."

The President of Myanmar, Thein Sein, a former general who seized power last year, has publicly pledged to seek "durable peace" with armed rebels and launched an appeal for an end to hostilities with the armies of ethnic minority groups. The President has promised to implement concrete efforts to end decades of conflicts, as part of the reform agenda that the government has promoted in recent months.

The Myanmar government has reached interim peace agreements with rebel groups in eastern DRC, where there are populations of ethnic Shan and Karen, but the conflict continues in the North with the Kachin groups. As reported in a note sent to Fides, the NGO "Christian Solidarity Worldwide", which recently visited the conflict area, noticed that "torture and other abuses" on minorities, and "the issue of over 50 thousand IDPs, requires an urgent response from the international community".

On the other hand, Win Mra, who chairs the Commission for Human Rights in Myanmar, has remarked that "the process of national reconciliation is a political issue" and that "investigating into areas of conflict is not appropriate at the moment". The NHRC has recently visited the theater of war in the Kachin State and urged the government and the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) to "engage in a dialogue process." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 15/2/2012)