



ASIA/MALAYSIA - Christians: in education reform, space to English, the Bible, rights

Petaling Jaya (Agenzia Fides) - Christians in Malaysia want to have a say in the process of revising the national education system and have officially asked the Ministry of Education to be consulted. This is what is reported to Fides by the "Council of the Churches of Malaysia" (CCM) which intend to have its say in the reform of the education system in Malaysia, announced by the government, which should be finalized by the end of 2012. Christians are convinced that education is crucial in order to build a nation in which there is democracy, harmony, tolerance, equal rights and opportunities.

In a statement sent to Fides by the CCM, what is underlined is that in Malaysia, a country of Muslim majority, the faithful Christians are 2.6 million, that is to say about 9.2% of the population, and therefore "cannot be completely excluded from this reform project." Daniel Chai, Secretary of the youth section of the CCM, stresses that the proposals that the Christians sent to the government to revise the school curriculum, aim at teaching English, since "the majority of Christians, who are natives of Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak, teach Bahasa Malaysia instead of English." Moreover, among the recommendations submitted to the Ministry, teaching facilities and resources for indigenous Christian teachers are asked, and also the introduction of the knowledge of the Bible, in English and Malay language, among the subjects taught. According to the CCM "it is a matter of justice and protection of the rights of non-Muslim students: providing everyone access to educational resources which will help build a more just nation."

The Ministry of Education has appointed nine working groups to examine various aspects of the reform project, but so far there are no Christian group representatives. The CCM notes that "if the Ministry includes Christian representatives, they could easily do so through the organization of Teachers of Christian Fellowship," which brings together Christian teachers. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 05/03/2012)