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EUROPE/SPAIN - 400 million children around the world live in conditions of slavery: the denunciation of the religious

Rome (Agenzia Fides) - On the occasion of World Day against Child Slavery, which is celebrated today, April 16, missionary organizations and international NGOs denounce the presence worldwide of about 400 million children living in conditions of slavery. Many work for the manufacture of products which are then sold in Europe and the rest of the West. The Spanish Confederation of Religious (Confer) has made a map of various parts of the world where the phenomenon is more frequent and, in a statement which was sent to Fides, it highlighted how "indirectly, this slavery becomes part of our daily lives, since we eat bananas or the coffee we taste might have been produced by the sweat of Latin American and African children." "It may well happen that the carpets on which we walk have been woven by little Pakistanis slaves; curtains, t-shirts, jewelry and many other things could be the result of illegal labor and forced labor regarding Indian children " continues Confer. For this reason, the organization invites not to "spare any effort to solicit civil authorities to fulfill their responsibility to fight against these injustices and to give all children the legal protection they deserve."
The date of the celebration of the Day is not random. It dates back to the killing of Iqbal Masih, a 12-year-old Pakistani Christian boy, killed on April 16, 1995 by his country's textile mafia because he had denounced the exploitation. Iqbal had worked as a slave in the textile industry since the age of 4, and, when at the age of 10 he escaped, he became a witness of this experience and managed to speak in parliament and universities in the United States and the European Union. Despite the years of struggle, international legislation, the complaints and support programs for the young in precarious situations, slavery continues to spread.
Confer denounces that the phenomenon is particularly widespread in India and Afghanistan, where boys and girls work in the construction industry. In Brazil, these small slaves produce the coal used for the manufacture of steel for cars and other mechanical parts. In Myanmar they are exploited for the collection of sugar cane and other agricultural products. In China they prepare explosives and fireworks used for pyrotechnics, in Sierra Leone they are exploited for the extraction of diamonds from the mines. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, thousands of children are enslaved for the extraction of cassiterite and coltan, and essential minerals used for computers, mp3s, mobile phones and many other tools that are used every day in the so-called first world. In Benin and Egypt it is estimated that one million children are forced to work in the cotton industry because they cost less and are more obedient than adults, as well as having the right size to nestle between the trees. Finally, the report by the religious says, in Cote d'Ivoire, about 12 000 children collect cocoa seeds that are exported for the elaboration of chocolate. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 16/4/2012)

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