



ASIA/MALAYSIA - The " Malaysian Spring ": civil society take to the streets, Catholics are present

Kuala Lumpur (Agenzia Fides) - The Malaysian civil society take to the streets again to ask for "transparency and reforms." In a demonstration held today, April 28, in the capital Kuala Lumpur, thousands of activists of the movement "Bersih" (25 thousand according to police, 80 thousand according to the organizers) marched in the city center, asking for changes to the electoral system. The Malaysian police fired teargas and used water cannons to disperse the demonstrators and arrested more than 20 people. According to the authorities the procession was not authorized to parade in the historic Independence Square (Merdeka Square).

As the general elections approaches, the Malaysian Parliament in past weeks passed a series of reforms, but according to the movement, the main problem remains unsolved: that of electoral fraud which, after independence, has ensured the continuity of power to the party " Barisan Nasional ". According to the activists, even the Electoral Commission is biased and the lists of voters are falsified.

Among the founders of the "Bersih" movement (which means "transparency") there is the Catholic lawyer Edmund Bon and the general leadership is entrusted to a woman, the Hindu lawyer Ambiga Sreenevasan, known for her commitment to the defense of human rights. The movement had already launched demonstrations and public events in July 2011, called "Spring of the East", in analogy with the "Arab spring". Today, the movement calls for transparency in the electoral process and the invitation of international observers to monitor the vote. According to Fides sources, there were many Catholic faithful present at the demonstration. Thousands came to Kuala Lumpur from the surrounding areas. Among Christians in Malaysia, one wonders if it is right to participate, more or less actively, in a political movement and be part of "Bersih", whose members are mainly young people. Young Christians, note sources of Fides, "think that the Church should be more present for the renewal of people's lives. There is a desire to participate and contribute to the common good, pointing out social problems, issues related to justice, legality, education system. Malaysian Christians want more involvement with the world, to bring Christian values into the public sphere. " (PA) (Agenzia Fides 28/4/2012)