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ASIA/MALAYSIA - The Church: yes to a Commission for truth and reconciliation

Kuala Lumpur (Agenzia Fides) - The Malaysian Church looks at the establishment of a "Commission for truth and reconciliation" with favor, which examines issues such as corruption and discrimination in the country. As reported to Fides by sources in the local Church, the proposal was launched by the movement for transparency "Bersih" that, since last year, has promoted a vast campaign in the Malaysian civil society, to demand transparency in the electoral process (see Fides 28/4/2012). His Exc. Mgr. Paul Tan Chee Ing, Bishop of Melaka-Johor and President of the Episcopal Conference, expressed support to the Commission's idea that, according to the president of the "Bersih" movement, should take care of investigating the relationships between the different ethnic and religion components in Malaysian society. "The current government, in fact, discriminates against those who profess Islam," said Ambiga Sreenevasan, president of "Bersih", calling for an urgent national reconciliation.
In a statement sent to Fides, Mgr. Paul Tan says he supports the proposal of "Bersih" because it "does not take sides in a political bloc." The Bishop focuses in particular on religious freedom, noting the links with the truth, that "comes from the dignity of every human being." "Every man is born with an inherent impulse toward freedom and toward the search for truth which should lead, ultimately, to love," said the Bishop. "But to achieve true freedom, it is necessary to remove all obstacles such as prejudice, distorted views, hate, anger, greed, which leads to corruption. This means that reconciliation with others is a prerequisite to attain true freedom." For this reason, the Bishop concludes, the entire Malaysian society should support such a Commission, because "it touches the fundamental nature of every human being."
On the issue of discrimination against non-Muslim citizens, raised several times by the "Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism" (MCCBCHST), Mgr. Tan cites some examples: the enormous difficulties in obtaining approval for the construction of a church or a temple; the lack of burial sites for non-Muslims; the issue of forced conversions to Islam, and calls for the government's commitment "to remedy this discrimination." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 26/6/2012)

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