



AFRICA/SOUTH AFRICA - "Maybe tomorrow the agreement for the Marikana mine " says to Fides the Bishop of Rustenburg

Johannesburg (Agenzia Fides) – Maybe tomorrow, August 29th, there will be the signing of an agreement between the unions and the managers of the platinum mine in Marikana (North West Province, in South Africa). This was reported to Fides Agency by His Exc. Mgr. Kevin Dowling, Bishop of Rustenburg.

"We hope the efforts of the government to sign a reconciliation agreement tomorrow among four trade union organizations and the management of the mine is successful," said Mgr. Dowling.

"Negotiations are still in progress and relate in particular to an increase in wages. Tension is still very high and workers who want to return to work are blocked with threats by strikers," said the Bishop, who is participating in efforts to negotiate with the other Christian leaders who are part of the South African Council of Churches.

On August 16, a union protest in the Marikana mine degenerated into violence: the police shot and killed 34 miners. In the fighting a total of 44 people died. In a statement sent to Fides Agency the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) called for a thorough investigation into the massacre and condemned the violence.

"I visited together with my priests, the wounded and the families of the victims. In the last two weeks we have tried to do everything possible to bring comfort to those who have been affected by the violence," said Mgr.

Dowling. "I just returned this morning from a visit to a hospital in Rustenburg where the most seriously injured were admitted. It is a terrible tragedy," he adds.

Mgr. Dowling says he is concerned because "in the South African society there is an increase of the temptation to resort to violence to deal with any problem. There are still many people living in poverty, who are losing hope for a better future. Especially among the young unemployed despair prevails. "

"I think we should solve problems by involving all: government, mining companies, trade unions and churches," concluded Mgr. Dowling. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 28/08/2012)