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ASIA/MALAYSIA - Religious leaders "no" to hudud: "Do not exploit religion for political reasons"

Kuala Lumpur (Agenzia Fides) - "Our position is clear: we want to maintain the status quo and support the current Constitution, which guarantees minorities and does not make Malaysia an Islamic state. We are opposed to any changes that introduce constraints of Islamic law as the hudud ordinances ": with these words, in an interview with Fides Agency, Rev. Thomas Philips, Protestant Pastor and President of the" Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism " expresses the position shared by non-Muslim religious leaders in Malaysia.
Some groups and Islamic leaders, MPs and even members of the UMNO, the ruling party, have in fact started to ask, in public forums and through the media, the introduction of hudud ordinances in the Malaysian legislation. The "hudud" are punishments imposed by the Islamic law, such as the cutting off of hands or stoning for women. According to these orders, the Koranic law is imposed also to non-Muslims: this, according to religious leaders, would be "unconstitutional."
The proposal has raised negative reactions of all non-Islamic religious minorities. The Hindu leader Mogan Shan remarked that "non-Muslims are already penalized by the existing legislation, especially when it comes to mixed marriages", as the non-Muslim spouse must convert to Islam. Religious leaders point out that in Malaysia there is already a "dual legal system": to settle legal disputes there are, in fact, civil courts but also Islamic Courts, which apply the Sharia law, reserved for Muslims. This dual-track creates misunderstandings and problems, as currently there are already about a thousand cases of "jurisdiction conflicts."
Rev. Philips explains to Fides: "I think that proposing public opinion and in political debate the introduction of hudud is a move with electoral intent: Due to the upcoming elections, some leaders want to gain consensus, touching religious themes.
We ask everyone not to exploit religion for political reasons. The campaign is based on how to deal with the real problems of the people and not by exploiting topics related to religion." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 06/11/2012)

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