



AFRICA/MADAGASCAR -Prisoners: also condemned to chronic malnutrition

Antananarivo (Agenzia Fides) - After the coup in 2009, the economy has plummeted and even the prison system is rapidly deteriorating. In 2008, the European Union allocated \$2.5 million to NGOs committed to improving the conditions of detention centers, but these funds will finish by the end of this year and it is unknown if the Ministry of Justice, whose budget was reduced by 40% in 2011, will have money for 2013. Among the most urgent problems to deal with is the emerging chronic malnutrition, which seem to "condemn" Malagasy prisoners in addition to the penalty proceedings.

The report for 2011 on human rights in Madagascar, prepared by the U.S. State Department, showed that this plague affects up to two-thirds of the inmates of some prisons and is for them the most common cause of death. In 2008 the Ministry of Justice had planned an increase of daily rations in prisons, but donors froze aid as a result of the coup, and the budgets of all ministries have been reduced. In July 2012, Médecins du Monde, one of the five NGOs active in 24 prisons in the north of Madagascar financed by the European Union, gave extra rations of Koba - crushed peanuts - and cassava to the malnourished prisoners.

Although the funds for prisons dropped, the number of prisoners continues to increase. The 83 prisons in the country had planned to accommodate 10,319 prisoners, but in reality they are home to 19,870. Overcrowding is often 100%. One can find 150 people in a cell envisaged for 40. In addition to food, very poor sanitary conditions, lack of water for all the prisoners and the challenge against mice is constant. According to Handicap International (HI), in 2012, 80% of prisoners were abandoned by their families, often because the poorest are unable to assist them financially. Over 3/4 of the country's population lives on less than \$ 1 per day. The HI has also emphasized the fact that half of the Malagasy prisoners suffer from various forms of mental disorders. In addition, only 47% are convicted, while many spend years waiting for judgment. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 26/11/2012)