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ASIA/MALAYSIA - The Churches: "We will exercise our constitutional right on the use of the name of Allah"

Kuala Lumpur (Agenzia Fides) - Christians in Malaysia will not observe the ban on using the word "Allah", imposed yesterday by the decree of the Sultan of Selangor state. The Churches in Malaysia are united with a common purpose: in a statement sent to Fides Agency, the "Christian Federation of Malaysia" (CFM) reiterates its "constitutional right" to call its God with the term "Allah", pointing out that the word has been present in the Malay language bibles for over 400 years. The Federation, established in 1985, is an ecumenical organization that brings together the main Protestant and Orthodox Churches and the Conference of Catholic Bishops.
The statement notes that "Allah is the Arabic word used by all the Christian communities of Bahasa Malaysia language ", citing the Christians of ethnic groups Orang Asli, Baba, Christians who live in the provinces of Saba and Sarawak, as well as all those who live in the Malaysia peninsular.
The Anglican Bishop Datuk Ng Luna Hing, President of the Christian Federation, states: "In accordance with Article 11 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, we affirm the right of every person to profess and practice their own religion and, in this context, the freedom of Churches to use the Holy Bible in Bahasa Malaysia language, in all our liturgical services and in meetings of worship."
In the last three years the Churches and the government in Malaysia confronted each other, also with a judicial process, regarding the question of the use of the word "Allah" which, according to some, was to be exclusive to Islam. Christians, reiterating their legitimate right, won the court case in 2009. To strengthen their position, the Churches refer to historical documents such as the "Dictionarium Malaico-Latin and Latin-Malaicum," published in 1631 and republished recently. The text, which contains the word "Allah" as a translation of "God", is the historical proof that the Christian missionaries like St. Francis Xavier, played a key role in the exchange of knowledge and culture between Europe and Southeast Asia. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 10/01/2013)

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