



## **ASIA/MYANMAR - Civil society: peace with the Kachin is the urgent need for the country**

Yangon (Agenzia Fides) - "The real urgency for the country is peace", say civil society groups in Burma, that have collected and re-launched a widespread appeal by the organization "Birmania Democratic Concern" (BDC). The text of the appeal, sent to Fides Agency, notes that "the fighting between the government and the Kachin troops intensify in the Kachin State" and ask the two armies fighting, the government and parliament in Burma, as well as the international community, to "make all necessary efforts to bring lasting peace in the Kachin land and the different ethnic groups of Burma."

"Genuine dialogue is the only way for the good of the peoples of the region and for peace in Burma," it said. The organizations claim: "We believe in equality and promote harmony in diversity. We believe in peaceful co-existence among people with ideas, beliefs, language, religion and different customs." "In order to achieve genuine national reconciliation in Burma, it is necessary to start from peace. The conflict between the central Government and the Kachin army is the great challenge for the democratization of Burma," the text continues. "The leaders of both armies have to think that peace will be achieved only by peaceful means: peace cannot be reached with war." For this reason an immediate cessation of military hostilities and the start of a negotiating table is immediately called for.

The groups ask the government "to establish a federal union", protecting the rights such as language, culture, the environment, religion, ethnic minorities who live in Myanmar, and working without delay to build peace in all areas of the country, as "children, women and elderly people are paying the highest price in the conflict."

The civil conflict in the Kachin state (Northern Myanmar) has been going on for 19 months. For about a month the Burmese armed forces have been attacking the rebels with helicopters and combat aircraft, with serious repercussions on civilians. Over 100,000 Kachin refugees have lost their homes and all means of subsistence. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 26/01/2013)