



ASIA/INDONESIA - New state regulation to stop social and religious conflicts: Bishops approve

Jakarta (Agenzia Fides) - There will be better coordination between central government, local civil authorities, the police and the army to prevent or stop social and religious conflicts which are shaking the vast Indonesian archipelago: this is the news introduced by the Regulations approved yesterday by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who signed the "Regulations of the President of the Republic 2/2013". As learned by Fides, the new rules give governors, mayors and rulers greater powers in the management of conflicts between different communities and social and religious violence, through the coordination of security policies.

Explaining the reasons of the new Regulation, Yudhoyono mentioned "violence, riots, social and religious conflicts and acts of terrorism", registered in 2012. In recent months the Indonesian government was, in fact, criticized "for not having been able to manage social conflicts." Fides sources note that, among the most sensitive areas are the Moluccas, the suburbs of the metropolis such as Jakarta and Bogor Bekasi, the area of Indonesian Papua, the island of Sumatra.

Fr. Benny Suseyto, Secretary of the "Commission for Interreligious Dialogue" in the Episcopal Conference, reports to Fides Agency the satisfaction and hopes of the Indonesian episcopate: "We believe it is a step in the right direction. The coordination between the government, police, local leaders is essential: too many times in the past, this absence has caused victims. The new rules will be beneficial to the various potentially conflicting contexts".

Fr. Benny explains to Fides: "The main causes of social and religious conflicts in Indonesia is the provocation and manipulation of religion for political ends. Often micro-local conflicts could not be stopped for the deficiencies of the political leadership or the lack of enforcement of existing laws." With regards to the impact that the new rules will have on extremist groups such as the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), the Secretary said: "Islamic extremist groups in Indonesia are small but noisy. If there is political will to stop them, they cannot harm anyone. Social and religious harmony can be built." In particular, the Catholic Church believes that "we need to act, promote respect for the law and human rights, but also to pray and dialogue with everyone." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 29/01/2013)