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ASIA/SRI LANKA - Bishops and priests urge the UN: stop the destruction of Tamil people

Colombo (Agenzia Fides) – A forceful call to the United Nations Organisation to intervene to stop the annihilation of the Tamil people being operated by the government of Sri Lanka, and to guarantee respect for human rights on the Island was contained in a letter signed by 132 leaders of different churches and religious communities in the north and east of Sri Lanka. The Letter, sent to Fides, and the first signature is that of the Catholic Bishop of Mannar, Bishop Rayyappu Joseph, demands decisive intervention on the part of the UN Human Rights Commission to ascertain responsibility and to promote authentic reconciliation in the country. Other signees include Catholic religious and missionaries working with diocesan Justice and Peace Commissions. The letter recalls that a previous UN resolution was too "feeble", and the present government showed no political will to implement UN recommendations ", such as investigation of abuses in the last stage of the civil war.
The letter says there is still no implementation of the principal UN Recommendation for Reconciliation: find a political solution to the ethnic conflict, release political prisoners, appoint a special Commissioner, ensure compensation for Tamil civilians, return land illegally occupied by the army, respect the right to commemorate the dead and the missing".
The letter denounces that in the past year many activists, students, trade unionists, religious brothers, journalists, lawyers who raised crucial questions – essence of democracy and a rule of law – were attacked, arrested, threatened and discredited by government ministers, public servants, police officers. "the victims - the letter recalls – include some of us, members of the clergy and also people who prefer to not sign the letter fearing reprisal ".
The religious leaders say "the killing and disappearance of tens of thousands of Tamil citizens as well as measures to systematically suppress the Tamil community, our culture, religion and language appear to aim for the annihilation of the Tamil people" who turn to the international community. The signees, stigmatizing government's authoritative methods, fear that "with these oppressive methods continuing even now the war has ended, our identity as a people will be destroyed " and they call for a political solution which recognises self-determination for the Tamil people. The letter, reaffirming the present government 's precise and direct responsibility, asks for an international commission to investigate persistent violation in the country of international law and human rights. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 21/2/2013)

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