



AMERICA/GUATEMALA - Clashes on mining. "One must avoid violence and protect the rights of communities," says a Bishop

Jalapa (Agenzia Fides) - An appeal to maintain calm and unity before the latest violence was addressed to the people by Mgr. Julio Cabrera Ovalle, Bishop of Jalapa (Guatemala). Mgr. Cabrera also recalls that the authorities have a duty and responsibility to eradicate the violence of criminal gangs in the area. The text points out, however, that the government's action in this task must be carried out "without trampling on the rights of communities and without intimidating social and religious leaders who promote peaceful demonstrations following the requirements of the law."

The Diocese of Jalapa had already expressed its concern for the measures taken against the indigenous community of Xinca of Santa Maria Xalapan, in Jalapa (Guatemala), when on 2 May the military forces occupied four villages in the south-east of Guatemala, imposing a "state of emergency" This measure was imposed by the government after clashes between police and opponents of the mining project awarded to a Canadian company, the latest in a series of conflicts on the extraction of natural resources, which erupted recently . 2 people died in the clashes and many more were injured.

President Otto Perez announced that the measure will last 30 days and is necessary to restore order and calm, while the leaders of the communities and the Catholic Church, as stated in the statement of the Diocese of Jalapa, argue that "the origin of social conflict in the area, are mining projects and little or no information on them given to the population. We are confident that if the government had listened to the demands of the people the social pressure that led to the current situation would not have developed. It seems that the interests of mining companies against the interests of the population are being protected." (CE) (Agenzia Fides 06/05/2013)