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ASIA/MYANMAR - Serious human rights abuses and religious freedom

Yangon (Agenzia Fides) - In spite of the positive signs of change and openness, "there continues to be serious abuses of human rights and religious freedom" in Myanmar: So says a new report prepared by the NGO Christian-based "Christian Solidarity Worldwide" (CSW), engaged at an international level to defend human rights, justice, freedom of religion. The Report, sent to Fides Agency, is the result of a fact-finding mission carried out for a month in Myanmar by experts and members of CSW. The CSW team, in addition to visiting the major cities like Naypyidaw and Yangon, visited the Kachin State in the north of the country, where civil conflict between local groups and the Kachin army has been going on for two years, with 100,000 displaced civilians. While in Yangon and in the city there is "a new climate of openness," - the Report notes - In areas of conflict with ethnic minorities "there are brutal violations of human rights against civilians."
A man of ethnic Kachin, detained by the army and then released, described to the CSW team the torture suffered: hanged upside down, beaten and stabbed with knives, sodomized, threatened with a hand grenade placed in his mouth. Since he was a Christian, he says to CSW, the military " left him for hours on sharp stones, with open arms, like Christ."
The CSW team was accompanied, in part of the mission, by Lord Alton of Liverpool, a member of the House of Lords in the British Parliament. The staff visited Ayela, where a Muslim community was attacked on March 22: Buddhist militants desecrated and burned the mosque, houses, the Islamic school. The local Muslims recall " living in peace for two centuries," but now Buddhist militants terrorize them.
CSW, appreciating some of the reforms undertaken by the state, focuses attention on the "culture of impunity, which must be addressed," calling for "urgent protection for religious and ethnic minorities" and the protection of religious freedom. CSW calls for an impetus to interreligious dialogue, peace-building, humanitarian assistance for the displaced, to the process of reconciliation involving all the ethnic minorities of the nation. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 15/05/2013)

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