



AMERICA/COLOMBIA - "A social response and not only military" is what the the Church hopes for Catatumbo

Bogota (Agenzia Fides) - "It is clear to everyone that the government must address the Catatumbo problem, it should do "all it can" to present the long-term plans for the area," said the President of the Episcopal Conference of Colombia, Cardinal Ruben Salazar during the opening of the 95th Plenary Assembly of the Colombian Episcopal Conference in Bogota, attended by 86 Bishops.

Catatumbo is a region on the border with Venezuela, where since June 10, thousands of farmers are in turmoil (see Fides 24/06/2013). The demonstrations have degenerated into clashes that caused the death of four farmers. Cardinal Salazar, reminding the press that he was Apostolic Administrator of Catatumbo claimed to "know the terrible situation in which people live in the area very well".

The Archbishop of Tunja (capital of the department of Boyacá), Mgr. Luis Augusto Castro Quiroga, I.M.C., hopes the government is able to give "a social response and not only military" to the farmers' demands and called for "clear solutions to help this region to make a quantum leap. "

According to information sent to Fides, the Colombian government has decided to send two committees: one in Tibú and the other in Cucuta, in the North de Santander (on the border with Venezuela), with the task of reaching an agreement to end the protests and put in place a program of economic development of the area.

Farmers call for the suspension of the eradication of illicit crops, the creation of a rural reserve, and to stop the announced large mining and agribusiness projects that, in their opinion, would damage the environment and the local production. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 10/07/2013)