



AMERICA/BOLIVIA - Violence and overcrowding in the prison of Palmasola: condemnation of Bishops

Santa Cruz (Agenzia Fides) - Condemnation and deep regret for the violence but also criticisms and concerns about the issue of overcrowding of prisoners in prisons: this is what the Bolivian Bishops expressed today in a statement that condemns the violence which took place yesterday, on August 23, in the prison in Palmasola, in the city of Santa Cruz, which led to the tragic deaths of 30 people (including a child) and numerous injuries. According to the police, it was a fight between prisoners that caused a fire in a section of the prison, which houses more than 5,000 prisoners.

The Church in Bolivia, in an official note sent to Fides, "condemns violence, wherever it comes from, and in all its forms. Bolivians must persevere in responsible dialogue and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation among brothers and sisters", it said. "These events - continues the official statement, signed by Mgr. Eugenio Scarpellini, Secretary General of the Bolivian Episcopal Conference - once again highlight the lack of infrastructure and severe overcrowding in prisons, which very often triggers violence and tragedies like this".

The Bishops say they are "close to the families of those who were killed and injured" and "pray for the victims and for the speedy recovery of the wounded". The Catholic Bishops' Conference expresses to the government's authorities "full readiness to provide timely assistance for the necessary reforms to the judicial and prison system, in order to address the structural causes of such events". They are "painful episodes" that must be "a lesson to improve the administration of justice and the prison system in our country".

The Bishops "add their voice to the many requests for clarification, in order to identify the causes and those responsible", and demand that such incidents do not recur in the future.

"To the detained brothers, sons of God – the Bishops say – we ask them to grow in fraternity, solidarity and in the rejection of hatred, lust for power and revenge". (CE-PA) (Agenzia Fides 24/08/2013)