



ASIA/SRI LANKA - The Commission "Justice and Peace" in Jaffna denounces "the genocide of Tamils"

Jaffna (Agenzia Fides) - "A genocide of the Tamil people is in progress in Sri Lanka": this is a strong and circumstantial complaint sent by the Commission "Justice and Peace" of the diocese of Jaffna in the north of Sri Lanka, to the Apostolic Nunciature and all the Bishops of the country.

In a long and detailed letter, sent to Fides Agency, the President of the Commission, Fr. S.V.B. Mangalarajah, launches the alarm and calls the Vatican to exert political pressure on the government of Sri Lanka in order to propose an "equitable political solution" regarding the national structure, in the post-civil war.

The letter notes some "basic unresolved issues" for the Tamil people, ethnic minorities living in the north and east of the island.

The first of the issues cited is to ensure transparency and accountability for human rights violations, particularly during the final stages of the war in 2009. The text calls for justice "for the killing of thousands of innocent civilians", and to start an international investigation with regards to the missing people, for the use of cluster bombs and also for the use of chemical weapons.

The second point is the confiscation of the lands of Tamil civilians: 90% of the occupied territories during the war have not yet been returned to its rightful owners. Even the Catholic Church has lost, in the land confiscated, three parishes with numerous churches, chapels and schools. Coastal land was confiscated, in a completely arbitrary way, and given to military or civil servants, to build luxury resorts or residents, to the detriment of local fishermen.

Another complaint, the third point, is the "coercive population control" of the Tamil population, many belonging to the Catholic faith. The women in the Kilinochchi district are brought to hospital and forced, with manipulated medical information, to take progesterone (with subcutaneous implants) for birth control.

The situation - fourth point - of thousands of Tamil "political prisoners" languishing in state prisons, some for over 15 years remains difficult. We are talking about civilians, women, the elderly, the sick, often accused of having only given food to the guerrillas. The Bishop of Mannar, Rayappu Joseph, was denied permission to visit them.

Fifth point, because of the military presence, especially in the Vanni region, Tamil families with young girls live in constant fear: there are many cases of sexual abuse carried out by the military, all go unpunished. In the areas left by the army, as occurred in the territory of Jaffna, human remains and graves were found, which could be the "desaparecidos".

Finally, the text denounces the "ethnic, cultural and religious colonization", sponsored by the government, on behalf of Sinhalese settlers, immigrants en masse to "convert" and "normalize" the historically Tamil areas. The government - said the "Justice and Peace" Commission - has heavily influenced the elections of the local provincial council, continues to censor the media and all forms of dissent, even with intimidation and threats, completely ignoring a path of "Justice, peace and reconciliation". (PA) (Agenzia Fides 23/10/2013)