



AFRICA - "The crisis of Lampedusa is also a wake-up call for Africa" say the Catholic Bishops of the continent

Rome (Agenzia Fides) - The lack of freedom and the search for better living conditions are the basis of tragedies such as that which occurred on October 3 off the Italian coast of Lampedusa, said a statement sent to Fides by SECAM/ SECAM (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar) where about 360 migrants from the Horn of Africa died.

"It is surprising - says the note - that so many refugees from East Africa continue to risk the dangerous journey to Europe in search of "freedom" due to poor political and economic conditions in their countries of origin".

The African Bishops emphasize in particular the conditions of Somalia and Eritrea, the two countries where most of the people involved in the tragedy of Lampedusa came from. "In the case of Somalia, al-Shabaab militia has been terrorizing the people since 1994. The results of this long are social and economic problems. The political atmosphere in Eritrea has also pushed most of these migrants out of their country. There is hardly freedom of any form – no press freedom, no religious freedom and no right to assemble. These people are said to be looking for a meaning to life".

Recalling the Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of Africa , "Governance, the Common Good and Democratic Transitions in Africa", the statement continues, "the drama of migration, with a growing number of young people who risk their lives to leave Africa, reflects the depth of the malaise of a continent that is still dragging its feet to provide favourable conditions such as employment, education and good health".

"After more than 50 years of independence, the continent of Africa is still engulfed in endless violence, illegal armed groups continue to threaten the safety of people, as in the case of Lampedusa ship incident" emphasize the African Bishops.

The document concludes by appealing to the responsibility of African institutions so that they work to coordinate policies to control migration flows and especially begin a process of improving the living conditions of their States. Europe is also asked to revise its immigration legislation and treat "these migrants with greater compassion". (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 25/10/2013)