



ASIA/HOLY LAND - The U.S. Bishops to Israel: say no to illegal demolitions. Respect the property of the Church

Jerusalem (Agenzia Fides) - The U.S. bishops took the field to protest the demolition of a house owned by the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem which took place on 28 October.

The intervention took the form of an official letter addressed on November 26 by Richard E. Pates - American Bishop of the Diocese of Des Moines and President of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the United States (USCCB) – to newly appointed Ron Dermer, Israeli Ambassador to the U.S.. "It is unpleasant" deplores Bishop Pates "that our first contact takes place in the context of protests".

In the letter, released by the official bodies of the Latin Patriarchate and sent to Fides Agency, Bishop Pates asked the diplomat to convey to the Israeli government the "strong objections" expressed by him as president of the body connected to the U.S.A. Episcopate about the demolition of the house where a family of 14 people lived, and now "are forced to live in tents".

In early November, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Fouad Twal, had visited the site of the demolition (see Fides 06/11/2013), defined by him on that occasion "an act of vandalism that violates international law". During his visit, the Patriarch added that "when the municipality and the Israeli government validate the destruction and move people from their homes, these practices feed hatred and undermine chances of a peaceful future". In the letter signed by Bishop Pates, the U.S. Episcopate echoed the protests carried out by Patriarch Twal: "these actions", reads the letter, "violate human rights and contribute to impair efforts to find a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict". Bishop Pates also announced that next year he will lead a "pilgrimage of Bishops in Holy Land, during which we have the intention to pray for peace with Jewish and Muslim leaders. But efforts in favor of peace", the U.S. Bishop says "will be compromised if these actions continue ". The final request addressed to ambassador Dermer is "to convey our serious concern to your government and demand that the rights of Church property are respected and that everything is returned to the Church and to the family that was evicted". (GV) (Agenzia Fides 06/12/2013)