



ASIA/INDIA - Human Rights Day, the cry of Bishops: "India has failed in promoting them"

New Delhi (Agenzia Fides) - "India is miserably failing in its obligation to respect, protect and promote the human rights of its citizens. The Indian situation shows widespread and flagrant violations of the rights that adversely affect the lives and the livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable groups": is what is stated by the Commission for the justice, peace and development in the Episcopal Conference of India, on the UN Human Rights Day, which is celebrated today, December 10. In a message sent to Fides Agency and signed by Fr. Charles Irudayam, Secretary of the Commission, the blatant sore spots are recalled, ie all cases in which the basic rights have been trampled on in India. Among the examples: the Bhopal tragedy in 1984; the pogroms based on caste or religion; impunity related to the perpetrators of the pogrom in Gujarat, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh. For all Indian citizens, the text continues, "the indifference of the state to demand to remove laws that discriminate on the basis of religion, the stubborn refusal to end the death penalty, and to repeal the law on special powers to the Armed Forces, show a lack of respect for human rights".

In addition, it states "the state has chosen to sacrifice the rights of its citizens on the altar of development". There are, in fact, "mass displacement of tribals for mining activities or construction of power, thermal or nuclear power plants to the detriment of the living conditions of the fishermen or farmers". "The failure of the state - continues the statement - is evident in the failure to protect women and children from abuse and sexual violence, despite the laws".

In this context, the Church offers its contribution to make India better: the Church is committed to promoting the weaker sections of society like the tribals, women, dalits, children and tries to be the "voice of those who have no voice". This approach, say the Indian Bishops "is reiterated by Pope Francis in his recent Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, when he says: "Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society. This demands that we be docile and attentive to the cry of the poor and to come to their aid" (EG n. 187). (PA)

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