



## **AMERICA/NICARAGUA - National dialogue to find solutions concerning the serious problem of prisons**

Juigalpa (Agenzia Fides) - Faced with overcrowding, poor conditions in the prisons of the country and cases of abuse in the prisons of Juigalpa, the Bishop of Juigalpa (area of San Juan and Rio Chontales), His Exc. Mgr. René Sócrates Sándigo Jirón, suggested to the Minister of Government Ana Isabel Morales, that national dialogue should be promoted to face the issue, in order to unite efforts in the search for appropriate solutions.

A note sent to Fides Agency by a local source, reads: "The prisons are a ticking time bomb, and despite this, the Catholic Church, over the years has always given its support to meet the needs of prisoners". Mgr. Sándigo Jirón adds: "before there was greater availability on behalf of the faithful for this type of commitment and help. Nowadays the channel of access has many obstacles, and this has meant that many volunteers do not have the same enthusiasm, they are disappointed and therefore aid decreases".

The Bishop insists on the need to "open to dialogue in search of a solution. Nowadays we have to thank the information that comes from within, because there is an investigative journalism that highlights such situations". Finally, he recalled that the Church has a vast pastoral concern for the entire population, but the pastoral care in prisons is one of the most important ones.

In Nicaragua, the Catholic Church, with its pastoral workers, is always present in prisons (see Fides 02/03/2012), not only for the care of prisoners but also in defense of their rights. From the information gathered by Fides, the situation in prisons is tremendous: there are 40 prisoners in cells built for 5 or 7. Prisoners have to even sleep in shifts because there is no space. There are places like Juigalpa, Granada, Chinandega, Tipitapa and Jinotega where the prison population is far above average. Only in the capital the situation seems to be under control. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 19/12/2013)