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ASIA/BANGLADESH - The year 2013 full of social conflict and human right abuses

Dhaka (Agenzia Fides) - "The year 2013 has been a year full of conflict and human right abuses. Over 100 people have been violently killed for political reasons during the year. More than 1,200 have died on the job. It has been a difficult year especially for the common people, because of the violent power struggles in the political and economic field. We are approaching the general elections, which will be in the first months of the new year, in a climate of social and political conflict": is the analysis delivered to Fides Agency by Rosaline Costa, Catholic activist for human rights and collaborator of the "Justice and Peace" Commission of the Bishops of Bangladesh. Costa guides the association "Hotline Human Rights Trust", which monitors the respect for human rights in the country.

After careful analysis, Costa told Fides: "The year 2013 has been a year characterized by social and political uncertainty, danger and violence." There was a return of the problem of labor exploitation which also calls into question large Western multinationals: "There are more than 2.8 million workers, men and women in approximately 5,000 factories - emphasizes the activist - who work for long hours with very low wages compared to any other country. Most of the factory owners do not allow workers to have a union. Because of poor inspections, devastating and deadly fires occur. In 2013, over 100 people were drowned or burned alive. In addition, the collapse of a nine-storey building, on April 24, 2013, killed 1,113 workers and wounded over 3,000. Most of the families of the deceased are still waiting for compensation. There has been a lot of pressure, internal and international, for immediate reforms. And so far none of the five owners of the building have been punished for negligence".

Another delicate chapter is related to the judgments in trials regarding war crimes committed at the time of the conflict for independence. A special Tribunal has sentenced the Islamic leader Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, now leader of the opposition. "Many Islamic extremist political parties - Costa explains to Fides - staged many demonstrations, with kidnappings, violence that hit innocent people: the tragic toll sees more than 100 people killed in violence for political reasons during 2013".

The whole of society was affected by this climate of violence, as evidenced, for example, by the school system: "Thousands of students in schools, colleges and universities, given the frequent interruptions of classes due to violence, could lose a school year or may not be able to take exams". The association "Hotline Human Rights Trust", concludes Costa, "will continue to do everything possible to help victims of human rights abuses, recognizing and denouncing the major injustices, creating awareness on social issues, seeking peaceful solutions to family and local conflicts". (PA) (Agenzia Fides 21/12/2013)

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