



AMERICA/CHILE - "One should listen to the Mapuche people in order to resolve the conflict in Araucanía" asks the Bishop of Temuco

Temuco (Agenzia Fides) - The first thing to be done urgently in order to finally resolve the conflict in Araucanía is to listen to the Mapuche people: pointed out the Bishop of the Diocese of Temuco, His Exc. Mgr. Héctor Eduardo Vargas Bastidas, S.D.B., to the local press, commenting on what happened in recent days. "The climate is quite tense - said the Bishop - we already had incidents of violence on Christmas Day, for different reasons and in different parts of the region. All this unfortunately causes a lot of discomfort, helplessness, so people are tempted to take justice into their own hands, but in doing so, the just and legitimate cause of the Mapuche people loses the support it deserves".

In Araucanía Chile, about 700 miles south of the capital, the so-called "Mapuche conflict" regards farmers and entrepreneurs because of the ownership of the land. The Mapuche in fact have always considered these lands as their ancestral heritage.

"First of all one should listen to the Mapuche people - said the Bishop. Meetings for dialogue were prepared, but had a very short duration". The note sent to Fides Agency reports the words of the Bishop of Temuco: "The Chilean government has done very little on this matter, essential agreements therefore have not been reached. Those who live here, and us as a Church, serve over 1,300 Mapuche communities, and we realize that the problem is very serious. We have an entire population waiting and we see that there are no solutions".

"We talk about key issues that must be resolved: territoriality, multiculturalism, constitutional recognition. Here in Araucanía there is willingness to dialogue - concluded Mgr. Vargas Bastidas, everyone wants to collaborate so the Mapuche people manage to have answers, but I have the impression that everything is at a standstill". (CE)
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