



AMERICA/COLOMBIA – Dialogue between two parties on equal terms, not between weak and powerful

Jerico (Agenzia Fides) – The block has been lifted to open the road leading to the Anglo Gold Ashanti mining area, in the town of Jerico of Antioquia (Colombia), where about 500 peasants from Quebradona, Vallecito, La Hermosa and Palo Cabildo had staged a 6 day protest against environmental damage in the area, mainly affecting local water supplies.

Thanks to intervention of the Bishop of Jerico diocese, Bishop Noel Antonio Londoño Buitrago, together with the local mayor and thanks especially to the readiness of the demonstrators, a decision to end the protest was reached after an evening Mass on Sunday 23 February, following a meeting of the parties to discuss the matter. In this regard the Bishop said: "This dialogue is between two sides on equal terms, not the weak against the powerful. It is essential to have dialogue, patience and clarity in decisions, because this is not a fight of the weak against the powerful, although it might appear to be; it has to be dialogue between equals".

The Bishop has urged the peasants to stay calm, when tension was rising on Saturday evening, 22 February: "I wish to ask the peasants to dialogue, to pay attention, to avoid exaggeration, and to stay within the legal context... they must know that they have the support of the Bishop and of the company. The Bishop will accompany them always, in peace, in harmony and in dialogue".

Bishop Londoño Buitrago, in his report to Fides says "the mining question is causing a series of consequences, social, environmental and economic which everyone can see". The Bishop had already contacted the local authorities as well as the central government warning against the possible explosion of violence due to lack of transparency in the management of mines. (CE) (Agenzia Fides, 25/02/2014)