



OCEANIA/PAPUA NEW GUINEA - Bishops: urgent "truly humane" response to question of refugees

Port Moresby (Agenzia Fides) – It is necessary “to give a truly humane response to the question of refugees and asylum seekers”. “People seeking asylum are human beings who deserve respect and recognition of their dignity”: this was affirmed in a statement issued by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, following yet another crisis at a Detention Centre on Manus Island. A report sent to Fides by Fr. Victor Roche SVD, Bishops’ Conference Secretary, says that the bishops conference “is appalled to hear of recent disturbances at the Manus Island detention centre resulting in death and injury for the asylum seekers. “We wish to convey our sincerest condolences to the family of the Iranian man who lost his life and our solidarity with those who appear to be the victims of violence” The Bishops stress the need for a “truly humane response to those fleeing danger in their country . When the Manus “detention centre” was reopened in the context of an agreement with the Australian government, the Bishops issued a public protest, “questioning how it could be right in the light of the PNG Constitution’s protection of freedom, to bring into our country and imprison people who have not broken our laws. The Bishops express concern at “the rhetoric” which accompanies the question, and recall that the Manus Centre does not meet international protection standards indicated by the United Nations Organisation. They warn the Papua New Guinea government that “detaining people against their will in PNG is not a just solution worthy of a great nation otherwise proud of its human rights record”. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 1/3/2014)