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AFRICA/CONGO DR - "We have 2,000 refugees to help," said the Bishop of Isiro-Niangara

Kinshasa (Agenzia Fides) - "Thank God, Christmas 2009 was not marked by bloodshed as was that of 2008, but our main concern remains the nearly 2,000 displaced persons of Tapili, who fled the attacks of the guerrillas in early December, which had caused hundreds deaths," reported Fides sources of the Diocese of Isiro-Niangara in the north-eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.
Bishop Julien Andavo Mbia, Bishop of Isiro-Niangara, had raised the alarm about the situation in some areas of the diocese which had been attacked by the Ugandan rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in the early weeks of December (see Fides 18 / 12/2009). Among the places hardest hit was Tapili, whose inhabitants were forced to flee. The guerrillas had spread leaflets that threatened to repeat the massacre on Christmas of 2008, which claimed the lives of at least 800 civilians (see Fides 9/1/2009 and 14/1/2009).
According to a report of the diocese on the attacks of the LRA, sent to Fides, between December 13 and 14, thirty members of the LRA attacked a village near Tapili, killing hundreds of people and seizing about 40 both young and old. St. Paul's Parish in Tapili was completely ransacked, except for the Tabernacle.
The rebels then attacked downtown Tapili where they looted all the health facilities, from clinics to the pharmacy, and kidnapped 270 other people. A false alarm has also provoked the flight of the population of the nearby village of Ndingba.
"The population is not assisted by anyone, both on site and in the areas surrounding, particularly Rungu, where most of Tapili's population has fled. They have had no assistance," reported Bishop Mbia. "Once again, the LRA rebels have sown death and destruction in the north-east part of the High Uele District. Defenseless people die without any guilt. I am sending out an SOS to anyone who can help these poor people. Caritas of Isiro-Niangara is ready to cooperate," the Bishop concluded, calling on the solidarity of all people. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 4/1/2010)

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