



AFRICA/CONGO DR - "It is a serious investigation, conducted with interviews with victims and rescuers," says Bishop of Doruma-Dungu on the report on LRA atrocities

Kinshasa (Agenzia Fides) – "The Human Rights Watch report is important because it demonstrates the level of the atrocities committed by the LRA (Lord's Resistance Army)," said Bishop Richard Domba Mady of Doruma-Dungu, located in the Eastern Province of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where for several years the Ugandan LRA rebels have tormented the local population (see Fides 24/3/2010).

The NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a report of 67 pages, entitled "Trail of Death: LRA Atrocities in Northeastern Congo," which documents the massacres committed by the LRA in northeastern DRC between late 2009 and early 2010.

"We know that HRW researchers have made a serious investigation, traveling in the area attacked by rebels and interviewing survivors and aid workers helping victims of violence. Among these there are also operators of the local Caritas," says Bishop Domba Mady.

According to the HRW report, the LRA fighters attacked 10 villages, killed and captured hundreds of civilians, including women and children. Most victims are men whom the fighters first tied to trees and then killed with machetes or crushed their heads using a hatchet and wooden clubs. Among the dead are also 13 women and 23 children: the youngest was only 3 years old and was burned alive. The guerrillas have also killed some prisoners thought to be too weak or to punish them, because they had tried to escape. Families of victims and local authorities later found their bodies along the route of 105 km from the village of Makombo to that of Tapili, a path walked on foot by LRA guerrillas and prisoners.

"The area most affected is that of Tapili, where more than 200 people were killed in mid-December," recalls the Bishop of Doruma, Dungu.

"I hope that the Congolese authorities and the international community finally act to stop these killings," says Bishop Domba Mady. "We cannot have entire populations living in fear because of this group."

The Bishop does not hide, however, the difficulties of an operation to root out the LRA from Congolese territory: "The LRA is divided into small groups that are always moving in the most remote and uninhabited parts of the forest. They only emerge to attack villages, where they take food and basic necessities, and also abduct people. Their attacks are sudden and rapid. Once they have raided the village, they disappear again into the forest. But this should not be an excuse for not acting," concluded Bishop Domba Mady. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 29/3/2010)