



AFRICA/CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC - "The people celebrated Easter in the hope of deliverance from the threat of the guerrillas," Bishop of Bangassou tells Fides

Bangassou (Agenzia Fides) – "The LRA rebels have not taken away our right and desire to live the faith and celebrate Easter," Fides was told by Bishop Juan Jose Aguirre Muños, Bishop of Bangassou in south-eastern Central African Republic, where the Ugandan rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continue to attack and loot among the civilians (see Fides 23/3/2010).

In the week before Easter, the LRA attacked the village of Agoumar on March 21 (leaving 11 dead, including a woman burned alive, and a guerrilla fighter killed by the people who organized groups of self-defense). On March 25, they attacked Karmadar and on the 28th, Dembo, where Ugandan soldiers intervened, killing 15 guerrillas. For two years, Uganda maintains a military contingent in Central Africa, with the permission of local authorities, in order to hunt down the LRA.

"I went into the area where the LRA rebels are," says Bishop Aguirre Muños. "The population is terrified and very concerned about the fate of more than 100 people, among whom are several girls who were abducted during attacks on villages committed in recent weeks."

"On Good Friday, April 2, I went into the village of Agoumar, which was attacked March 21. I tried to comfort the population that has been sorely tried, instilling hope for a better future. However, LRA violence did not cease. The next day, April 3, Holy Saturday, 6 people were killed on the road to Rafa, the most important part of the area. The car was set on fire, as were the bodies of the poor victims, a further sign of insult against the helpless civilian population," said Bishop Aguirre Muños.

"I celebrated Easter at Rafa. It was a celebration characterized by sadness and concern for the fate of the hostages, but open to the hope of peace brought by the Resurrection. We asked the Lord to comfort the victims and especially for the return of hostages to their families," concluded the Bishop of Bangassou. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 7/4/2010)