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ASIA/THAILAND - Priest from Bangkok: “Government should be more patient to avoid bloodshed”

Bangkok (Agenzia Fides) – Amidst growing tension and violence in Bangkok, emerges the death toll of urban warfare taking place between "Red Shirts" demonstrators (20 dead and 100 wounded in the past 24 hours), and there are increasing calls to stop the spiral of violence that, as Fides learns from Fr. Surasit Chumsriphan, Pastor of Assumption Cathedral in Bangkok, "the Thai population absolutely rejects.”

After yet another day of tension and fighting in the streets of Bangkok, the priest commented in an interview with Fides: "The situation is tense and we are very worried. We ask the government to stop the violence. The parties must return to the negotiation table. If this continues, more people will die and there will be a real massacre. It is a tragedy. The Thai people do not like this violent end and all hope for a peaceful solution."

On the reasons which have led the country to the brink of internal war, Fr. Surasit said: "It should be noted that the Red Shirts had essentially accepted the plan proposed by the government, which could be the outline for a solution, adding only the requirement that the deputy prime minister be questioned by police, to clarify his position. But now, the government is under pressure from strong powers, lobby groups that are pushing for a quick fix and the use of force."

The priest calls upon the patience of the civil authorities: “We ask the government to be patient with the protesters. Moreover in recent years, when there were “yellow” (another faction) demonstrators in the streets, the protest lasted up to six months, but without violence and deaths on the streets. Why act differently now? We ask the government for more dialogue and more sacrifice. In our smallness, we continue to pray for non-violence, peace, and harmony in the country."

The political crisis began last March with the occupation of the streets of Bangkok by anti-government protesters. So far, it has led to 30 deaths and over a thousand injured. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 15/05/2010)

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