



AFRICA/CENTRAL AFRICA - "Military reinforcements are on their way to protect the people from the LRA guerrillas," Bishop of Bangassou tells Fides

Bangassou (Agenzia Fides) - "We hope that the military mobilization in these hours will be able to restore security in the villages east of my diocese," Fides was told by Bishop Juan Jose Aguirre Muños, Bishop of Bangassou in the southeastern Central African Republic. In some areas to the east of Bangassou, the Ugandan guerrillas of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continue to sow death and destruction (Fides 04/07/2010).

"Yesterday, May 18th, I saw passing through Bangassou, headed east, about 600 Central African soldiers. As we have been told, the French Government has promised to send military aid into the area by air. Finally, there are unconfirmed rumors that Chad and Sudan are ready to send in their troops to fight the LRA," said Bishop Muños. "The news I have from the east of the diocese are still fragmentary. What is certain is that the area is almost isolated because no one has ventured into the streets after the attack on a World Food Program truck," says the Bishop of Bangassou.

On May 5, a WFP truck was attacked by a group of LRA guerrillas near the village of Dembo. Two WFP workers died in the attack and two others were injured.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), between March 20 and May 6, the LRA has carried out 10 raids in the province of Haut-Mbonou, in the southern Central African Republic, especially in the villages of Mboki, Agoumar, Guerekindo, Bouete, Kitessa, and Miskine. The victims are 36. Many houses were burnt and 10,000 people had to flee. 411 have fled across the border into the Democratic Republic of Congo. According to the UN agency, the newly displaced are mainly in the cities of Bangassou, Rafa, and Zemio Mboki.

The UNHCR notes that the LRA is present also in the DRC and southern Sudan. In the DRC, the last full-scale attack by the LRA took place between February 22 and 26 in Kpanga, about 60 km north of Niangara, in the district of Bas-Uele, in the Eastern Province. The LRA has killed at least 100 men, women, and children. In Sudan, the attacks are concentrated in the Central and Western Equatoria region, bordering Uganda, DRC, and Central African Republic. The attacks have also forced 20,000 Congolese to seek refuge in Sudan and the Central African Republic. The UN estimates that the LRA in Sudan have killed 2,500 people and forced the flight of another 87,800, mostly in Central and Western Equatoria. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 19/05/2010)