



AFRICA/BURUNDI - "There is no reason why local elections should be repeated " say Catholic Bishops

Bujumbura (Agenzia Fides)- " There is no reason why local elections should be repeated" the Catholic Bishops of Burundi have said in a statement, a copy of which was sent to Fides. The statement issued by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Burundi was read in every parish in the country yesterday Sunday 20 June.

Burundi's opposition parties have rejected on the grounds of fraud, the results of local elections held 24 May, won by the Party led by President Pierre Nkurunziza, and called for a repeat election.

"On the basis of reports sent in by our own observers present at the elections, and on reports by other observers of the civil society, and taking into account the replies given by the independent electoral commissions to appeals presented by the Parties which reject the results of the vote, there is no valid reason why the elections should be repeated" the statement says.

As a sign of protest, Opposition parties have said their candidates will not stand in presidential elections on 28 June, or in legislative elections on 23 and 28 July.

The Bishops are of the opinion that the electoral process should continue as long as certain conditions are respected, for example: start constructive dialogue between the National Independent Electoral Commission and political parties in order to discuss any reported irregularities and to avoid them in successive votes; messages from all parties should call the people to calm and peace; continue to promote the participation of all the people in democratic life so no one feels excluded; to everything necessary to guarantee peace and security in the country with respect for the Constitution.

The Bishops urge those who have committed acts of violence, intimidation or corruption to destabilise the electoral process, to repent and desist from such behaviour which is contrary to peace and democracy.

In recent weeks a series of grenade attacks killed and injured several people and caused tension in the country.

The latest attacks took place during the night of 18 and 19 June: a series of grenade attacks injured 21 people in various parts of Burundi.

"We offer sincere condolences to the grieving families. We call on the government and on the political parties, each in his own area of responsibility, to guarantee security, in order to prevent the country from falling once again into crisis" the Bishops conclude. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 21/6/2010)

> LINKS

See Bishops' statement in French:

http://www.fides.org/fra/documents/COMMUNIQUE_de_la_Conference_des_v_ues_Catholiques.rtf