



AFRICA/MOZAMBIQUE - Local Church source in Maputo tells Fides about the "spontaneous uprising that took everyone by surprise"

Maputo (Agenzia Fides) – "This has been a spontaneous uprising that took everyone by surprise - the government, the opposition parties, and the trade unions. The protest seems to have evolved 'from the bottom up'. SMS messages were sent out to mobile phones, urging the people to gather in downtown Maputo to protest the rising prices of basic necessities," Fides has been told by a local Church source from Maputo. (which for security reasons wishes to remain anonymous). The capital of Mozambique yesterday, September 1, was the scene of serious clashes between police and demonstrators protesting against rising prices. At least 4 people (2 of which were girls who were on their way home from school) were killed and dozens of others were injured in the fighting.

The source described yesterday's incident to Fides: "Until 9:30 am, downtown Maputo was the same as always, with traffic and the shops open. Then suddenly, the streets were empty and there were sounds of protest: police sirens, gunshots, and screams. Several people took advantage of the demonstration, looting shops and malls. The clashes lasted until early afternoon. Then, towards evening, calm returned, at least in the downtown area of the capital."

"This morning, Maputo seems calm, but the streets are almost completely deserted as the transportation strike continues in protest of a rise in the prices of fuel, electricity, water, and bread," reports Fides' source.

"People are surprised by some of the price escalations," said our source. "In particular, one wonders why the electricity price has increased if Mozambique can export abroad a part of its electricity production. The rising price of gasoline has caused the suspension of government subsidies that kept fuel prices lower at the pump. With the financial crisis, the government was forced to cut spending and therefore, the facilities in the purchase of fuel. The price increase is also determined by the strong revaluation of the South African Rand compared to the local currency, the Metical. Over the past six months, the value of the Rand compared to the Mozambican currency has doubled and this has led to a sharp rise in inflation, as Mozambique imports most of its basic necessities and other products from South Africa. The remittances of Mozambican immigrants in South Africa are insufficient in offsetting the rising costs," concludes the source of Fides. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 02/09/2010)