



AFRICA/CÔTE D'IVOIRE - Two Presidents and two Governments: Côte d'Ivoire on the verge of chaos; the Church appeals for "sensibleness"

Abidjan (Agenzia Fides) - Côte d'Ivoire has two different Presidents and Governments. Alassane Ouattara, who according to the Independent Electoral Commission and the international community won the presidential ballot of 28 November, was sworn in as President on 4 December, via a letter sent to the Constitutional Council, the competent body to declare the winner of the elections. Due to alleged fraud the same Council revoked the victory originally assigned to Ouattara by the Independent Electoral Commission, attributing it instead to the former President Laurent Gbagbo (see Fides 4/12/2010). The latter was sworn in a few hours before at the presidential palace in Abidjan.

Ouattara appointed a new Government led by outgoing Prime Minister Guillaume Soro, who had placed his office in the hands of Ouattara, only to be confirmed anew. Gbagbo, on the evening of Sunday, 5 December, appointed Gilbert Marie N'gbo Aké, Prime Minister of the other Government. The African Union has sent former South African President Thabo Mbeki to mediate between the two parties.

"The situation is very delicate. Mbeki continues with his mediation, but so far there are no possibilities for agreement, because Gbagbo and Ouattara remain firm on their positions," a source from the local Church tells Fides. "The Catholic Church has offered to contribute to the mediation and launched continuous calls for dialogue and calm. Yesterday, during the consecration of a new church in Abidjan, Archbishop Jean-Pierre Kutwa of Abidjan and spokesperson for the group of religious leaders for "peaceful" elections appealed to Gbagbo and Ouattara to be sensible and invited the population to remain calm. Archbishop Kutwa reminded the faithful that God will not abandon Cote d'Ivoire and that it is still possible to find a peaceful solution," said the Fides source. The situation remains tense even after the cancellation of the curfew and the reopening of the border. "According to an opposition newspaper, in recent days in clashes throughout Côte d'Ivoire, there have been 54 deaths, but this news is absent in the media connected to Gbagbo. This information is difficult to verify. To prevent the spread of information and "rumours" that incite the minds of the population, text message services (SMS) from mobile phones have been blocked," concludes our source. (LM) (Agenzia Fides 06/12/2010)