



AFRICA/CÔTE D'IVOIRE - Religious leaders announce six days of prayer and fasting for peace

Abidjan (Agenzia Fides) - Religious leaders of Côte d'Ivoire have launched an appeal to the people to not “give in to provocations and violence from whatever side they come,” said a statement sent to Fides.

The document is signed by the “Group of Religious for Peace”, which is connected to the Catholic Church. “After having rejoiced about how the first round of elections occurred, we are now concerned about the turn of events in the few days leading up to the second round,” the statement said. On 3 December, the Constitutional Council annulled the results declared on 2 December by the Election Commission under which the winner of the election was Alassane Ouattara, with 54% of the vote, and instead they declared that the winner of the ballot held on 28 November was the outgoing President Laurent Gbagbo. Côte d'Ivoire now has two Presidents with two respective Prime Ministers and their governments (see Fides 6/12/2010).

While the international community has recognized the victory of Ouattara, fear of fresh violence in the country is growing, also fueled by ethnic division. “Faced with the looming threat,” write religious leaders to the population, “we make this solemn appeal not to yield to provocations and violence from whatever side they come; not to utter words of ethnic, religious and nationalistic exclusion; not to commit acts of intimidation, threat and unproductive provocation.”

Religious leaders have called for six days of fasting and prayer for peace in Côte d'Ivoire starting today, 13 December until 18 December.

Today the European Union should establish “restrictive measures against Côte d'Ivoire, which refers to those who are obstructing the peace process, and in particular, those who do not want to accept the election results,” said a statement, with a clear reference to Gbagbo and his entourage. Côte d'Ivoire has also been suspended from the activities of the African Union. (LM) (Agenzia Fides 13/12/2010)

> LINKS

Declaration of the Group of Religious for Peace (in French):

<http://www.fides.org/fra/documents/DECLARATIONDUCOLLECTIFDESRELIGIEUXPOURDESELECTIONSAPAISEES.doc>: