



AFRICA/EGYPT - A missionary among the protesters in Cairo tells Fides: "I have not experienced a climate of fanaticism, but one of joy and celebration"

Cairo (Agenzia Fides) - "Internet connections have just been restabilised," Father Luciano Verdoscia reports to Fides. Fr Verdoscia is a Comboni missionary who has worked for years in Cairo, in contact with the children who live in Mansheya, the quarter for garbage collectors (called "Zabbaleen"). Fr Luciano descended on Tahrir Square, in recent days, to capture the atmosphere of the events, which he describes to Fides.

"The atmosphere was joyous and festive except last Friday (28 January), when there were clashes just below the windows of our house," says the missionary. "Then, when the army was deployed, order returned, respecting the freedom of the people to demonstrate. I did not see any further acts of violence. Indeed, leaflets were distributed urging the crowd not to react to provocations. Instead an order of service was organised. The youth insist they want to create a new reality, with solid gestures. They are even trying to keep the square clean, picking up the cards from the ground".

"I have not experienced a climate of fanaticism," continues Fr Luciano. "Some people were praying and others were not. There are little signs that make us realise that we are looking at a revolution that is not of a religious nature. It is the youth who organised the uprising, not the Muslim Brotherhood."

After last night's televised address by President Mubarak, whom the Head of State announced will not be a candidate in the presidential elections in September, Egypt awaits the events. Today the Ministry of Defence issued a communication inviting the protesters to go home. "After the President's speech, the voice was raised of those who, while calling for his resignation, are asking that time be given to the President to leave his office with dignity. These people argue that we should not dump all the responsibility on the President for the Country's situation," said the missionary.

"What may happen, nobody knows. We know that the most organised opposition is represented by the Muslim Brotherhood, which has several branches. There are some parts more violent than the other more moderate, parts which seek dialogue and others who seek confrontation. The youth with whom I spoke say they want a democratic government not an Islamic government. We will see how the events evolve, hoping and striving for the best," concludes Fr Luciano. (LM) (Agenzia Fides 2/2/2011)