



## **AFRICA/EGYPT - "The climate has changed: foreigners are urged not to leave their homes. There are many Mubarak supporters". Missionary in Cairo speaks to Fides**

Cairo (Agenzia Fides) - "The climate has changed following the clashes yesterday, 2 February, among demonstrators in Tahrir Square and the supporters of Mubarak," Fides was told by Father Luciano Verdoscia, a Comboni missionary who has worked for years in Cairo. "In my opinion, the latter caused the clashes. Some say that they are the militias from the National Party, the party of the President. Others claim that they have paid people to attack the demonstrators. I have seen some shady types around," said Fr Luciano. "They are spreading unconfirmed rumours about the presence of foreign provokers. There is a hardening by the regime against the foreign media. They issued a statement which urges foreigners not to leave the house, especially after midday." "Before the clashes, the climate was very different," emphasises the missionary. "The previous violence occurred because of police intervention, which I can personally testify to, because it took place under our windows. We live in the centre of Cairo where it all began. Now, however, tempers are heating up. We need to see tomorrow what will happen after the prayer," says Father Luciano, outlining a complex picture of the situation, because not everyone is in favour of the immediate resignation of the President. "There are many people who support Mubarak. In my opinion they may count for 40% of the population, particularly persons from the high and middle-upper classes. Remember that the division between rich and poor in Egypt is very deep and evident." "I hope that this will not have a bloody ending, because what has occurred in recent days has been an example of nobility, gentleness and courage on the part of this people" concludes the missionary. (LM) (Agenzia Fides 3/2/2011)