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# AFRICA/EGYPT - "The opposition could talk with Suleiman if they want to assume power in the meantime," missionary tells Fides

Cairo (Agenzia Fides) - "The Country is expecting demonstrations after Friday's prayers," Fides was told by Father Luciano Verdoscia, Comboni missionary who has worked for years in Cairo among children who make a living by collecting garbage. "Everybody is hoping that President Mubarak will resign. Now they all agree: if Omar Suleiman will assume power in the meantime, the opposition could sit at the negotiating table to bring the Country to elections in September. From the conversations I had with several Egyptian, it has emerged that Suleiman, despite being the former head of the secret services, is esteemed because they say he has not been corrupted, and have they have confidence that he could work for change for the good of the country," said Fr Luciano.

On the growth of the protest movement to other areas, in addition to large cities such as Cairo and Alexandria, Fr Luciano says: "The protests were concentrated in large cities, but from the evidence I could gather, villages and even the outer suburbs of metropolitan areas are calm. In Greater Cairo, which takes in the suburbs and has a population of 20 million people, those who want to demonstrate against the Government meet in the city centre, thanks to the underground train which is quite efficient.

"In the quarter where I work to assist children, the situation is calm: people leave their houses, and the markets are open. Although there is a little fear due to the deterioration of security conditions and incidents of crime that have followed. The people believe that the police are behind these crimes, or the convicts who are released from prison, taking advantage of the chaos, or thieves and common criminals, taking advantage of the situation. In the outer and popular suburbs, groups of young people are organised to control the movements of suspects.

"People also say that some fires have been started by the Muslim Brotherhood," continues Fr Luciano, "but there is no evidence in this regard. I note only that in Giza a cinema and a cabaret were burned, places which had been defined as 'sinful' by the Muslim Brotherhood. On this point I heard, however, several Muslims say that they do not want their Country to enter the logic of what is forbidden and what is lawful." (LM) (Agenzia Fides 4/2/2011)

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