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AFRICA/EGYPT - "I have seen the best of Egypt," Fr Luciano Verdoscia who saw the demonstrators in Tahrir Square tells Fide

Cairo (Agenzia Fides) - "The situation has greatly improved," Father Luciano Verdoscia told Fides, the Comboni missionary who has worked for years in Cairo. "Yesterday, 4 February, the army took significant steps, blocking the access road to the protesters in Tahrir Square (where the demonstrators gathered). Protesters were organised by a very efficient patrol service from a smaller parallel road. From there we had access to the square."
"I went down among the demonstrators," Fr Luciano said to Fides. "Before entering the square I met a hundred young people, probably paid by people who are likely sympathisers of the regime. From what I saw, I got the impression that they are very young boys, hired by people who want to preserve the regime."
"I passed this group on a side street," continued the missionary, "and I encountered the police ordering the protesters. After presenting documents and being subjected to a search I was allowed into the square. I must say that the process was calm and courteous. Those carrying out the checks were good people."
"I spoke with various demonstrators: most of them were young, under 40. About 30% were adults and there were Muslims and Christians. The atmosphere was joyous and the slogans were ironic and making fun of the Government. Everyone was free to express their opinions and the discussions were educated. From what I heard and saw, I could understand that the people have very clear ideas: people want to go beyond the regime. The divisions, which are also present in Egyptian society, will emerge later, but now we want to turn the page."
The missionary explained why he went to Tahrir Square: "I went to try to understand the make-up and the reality in the square. There were those hurt by stones thrown, assisted by volunteer doctors and nurses, in a climate of solidarity. I said 'I've seen the best of Egypt'. In Egypt there are so many educated, polite, brave people. I hope that this is the Egypt that will emerge from this, because Egypt will determine the future of all the Middle East".
(LM) (Agenzia Fides 5/2/2011)

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