



## **AFRICA/SUDAN - Religious leaders: the LRA is a threat to the new independent State of Southern Sudan**

Juba (Agenzia Fides) – The independence of Southern Sudan, approved by a staggering majority of voters in the referendum held from 9-15 January, is being threatened by the presence of guerillas from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), advise members of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI), which met in Northern Uganda. The Acholi are the largest ethnic group in Northern Uganda. Belonging to this ethnic group are both members of the LRA and the Ugandan victims of this group. For years the LRA has abandoned Northern Uganda, finding refuge in a vast area stretching from north-eastern Democratic Republic of Congo to the south-east of Central Africa, to Southern Sudan.

“The LRA undoubtedly constitutes a threat to Southern Sudan,” Bishop Edward Hiiboro Kussala told Fides. He is Bishop of the Diocese of Tombura-Yambio, the south-Sudanese diocese most affected by the group's actions.

“Only three days ago, the guerrillas attacked my home village, Source Yubu, where they killed four people and abducted seven others,” said the Bishop.

The Acholi religious leaders have repeated their opposition to a military solution (supported by the Governments of the countries involved) and appealed for them to resume peace talks with the LRA's leaders. Bishop Kussala also stated that “only negotiations can put an end to the LRA's violence,” and stressed: “I, too, am launching an appeal for the resumption of dialogue with the LRA.” (LM) (Agenzia Fides 7/2/2011)