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AFRICA/EGYPT - An important breakthrough: "now the press highlights the corruption of the regime," Fr Verdoscia tells Fides

Cairo (Agenzia Fides) - "Yesterday we witnessed an imposing demonstration in Tahrir Square. The protest movement is gaining in numbers every day," Fr Luciano Verdoscia, a Comboni missionary who works in Cairo tells Fides. The priest recounts that even the press and information outlets are changing their attitudes: "the newspapers and the television networks have begun to make accusations against former ministers, releasing news about the corruption of the administration. They were even made of the charges, which are certain to be tried, that the former Interior Minister is somehow implicated in the attack against the Coptic Church of Alexandria on 31 December."

The corruption and financial inequalities are some of the main reasons for the protest: "In Egypt there is not hunger, there is extreme poverty," said Fr Luciano. "Bread is in fact subsidized by the Government. Arabic bread costs 5 Egyptian cents (less than one euro cent). So the poor do not go without bread."

To understand the protest, says Fr Luciano, "it needs to be remembered that this is a revolution of young people, especially university graduates, who know how to use the Internet, but do not have the chance to find decent work, relative to their abilities. If a person who has a degree and speaks two languages, is offered a salary of 150 euros per month, they will not accept it. But then there are people who can receive salaries of 100-200 thousand Egyptian dollars (15-20 thousand euro) per month. There are business people who have earned profits of 10 thousand per cent thanks to the purchase and sale of land: buying a plot of land at 10 euro per sq. metre and then selling it at 5-7 thousand euro per square metre creates glaring inequalities."

The fact that newspapers publish data on the accumulation of money by Ministers who have helped these business people, who have earned money by speculating, thus represents an important breakthrough. Somehow President Mubarak's regime tries to satisfy the desire for social justice by firing the most exposed Ministers, who are now being charged and may not leave the Country.

Finally, we ask Fr Luciano what it is like experiencing these events. "As a missionary community we ask ourselves what this means for us, how to be prophetic and how we can live out the Gospel Beatitudes in this context. Thus we have decided to witness to the desire for justice and freedom of this people," responded the missionary. (LM) (Agenzia Fides 9/2/2011)

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