



AFRICA/CÔTE-D'IVOIRE - The religious leaders of Côte d'Ivoire: "Do not turn a political crisis into a religious conflict"

Abidjan (Agenzia Fides) – Christian and Muslim leaders in Côte d'Ivoire, in condemning the destruction of two mosques on 25 February in Yopougon, warn people not to turn the political crisis affecting the Country into “a religious conflict.”

In a statement sent to Fides, the Forum of Religious Confessions of Côte d'Ivoire notes the sad condition into which the Country has fallen, “to the west, the situation can lead us to widespread blaze. At the centre the situation continues to be worrisome. Here in the south, every day we help people of all ages travel, fleeing the horrors of a situation that we know, in search of a hypothetical safer refuge.”

“The recent events force us to once again draw your attention to the situation that certain people want to turn from purely political to one of conflict. For this reason we strongly condemn the attacks on various places of worship. We want to remind people that places of worship are holy and sacred and that, like embassies, are accorded the status of extraterritoriality. The churches, mosques and temples, then, are inviolable places.” Places of worship have also become shelters for people fleeing the violence.

According to a note sent to Fides, Archbishop Ambrose Madtha, Apostolic Nuncio of Côte d'Ivoire, together with the Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of Yopougon, Bishop Salomon Lezoutié, and five other religious leaders, visited mosques to show their personal involvement and sympathy towards fellow Muslims, condemning these scandalous acts. The representatives from the Catholic Church have made a strong appeal to people to respect the sacred places of all religious confessions and have turned their prayers to God to inspire political leaders to resolve the Ivorian crisis, which is clearly political and not religious. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 5/3/2011)