



AFRICA/CÔTE-D'IVOIRE - "The European Union should drop the embargo on medicine": appeal to Fides by Archbishop of Abidjan

Abidjan (Agenzia Fides) - "I call on all to respect life. In the name of the right to health, I ask that the European Union drop the embargo on medicine". This is the appeal launched through Fides by Archbishop Jean-Pierre Kutwa of Abidjan. "You do not need a lot of arguments to understand that life is sacred and that it must be protected. The fifth commandment says 'Thou shalt not kill'. Every person has the right to health and life. Therefore, the embargo on medicine is an act that goes against that right. So I ask the European Union to lift this embargo so that people may receive care.

Since 28 February an embargo on medicine decreed by the European Union has been in effect, to force Gbagbo to resign and hand over power to Ouattara. "I issue an appeal to the two leaders (Gbagbo and Ouattara) so stop the killings and violence," concludes Archbishop Kutwa.

The clash between the armed forces, who support the incumbent President Laurent Gbagbo (who has not accepted the results of the presidential ballot in November and is considered the legitimate president of the country), and militants close to President-elect, Alassane Ouattara, is causing serious damage among the civilian population in Abidjan and in other areas of Côte d'Ivoire. "The exodus of people continues. The noise of artillery ceased half an hour ago. For now we have a truce. Yesterday we suffered a very heavy bombardment. Civilians continue to die, killed by stray rounds and artillery shots," Sister Rosaria tells Fides, from the Congregation of the Holy Family of Spoleto, in Abobo, the neighbourhood in Abidjan where the fighting began between Gbagbo's security forces and the 'invisible commando', a group close to President-elect Alassane Ouattara.

"A climate of fear now reigns in Abidjan. The city is emptying out. Those who can, escape to the villages where they have friends or relatives able to accommodate them" said another local source from the Church to Fides, who for safety reasons, cannot be named. A crack could come from the call for dialogue launched by Gbagbo, who has acknowledged that violence and the use of force are not the solution to the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 25/3/2011)