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AFRICA/CÔTE D'IVOIRE - Clashes in Abidjan near national radio-television network headquarters; damages to Church buildings in Duékoué

Abidjan (Agenzia Fides) – Violent clashes with heavy artillery continue in Abidjan, the economic capital of Côte d'Ivoire, among the Republican Forces of President-elect Alassane Ouattara and the Security Forces who remained faithful to President Laurent Gbagbo. A source from the local Church, who for security concerns wishes to remain anonymous, tells Fides: “The clashes have been concentrated around RFI headquarters, the national radio-television network, after which yesterday morning, about 6.00 am, the Republican Forces took it from the hands of Gbagbo's men.
“RFI continues to transmit messages against the UN military mission in Côte d'Ivoire, accused by Gbagbo of fighting for Ouattara and encouraging those loyal to Gbagbo to react,” adds our source. “In effect, in Abidjan, the resistance by Gbagbo has been very strong, so strong that the Republican Forces have not been able to advance towards the Presidential Palace.
“Ouattara closed all the borders then reopened the airport of Abidjan to enable foreigners to evacuate. The UN seems to be running the airport.
“Yesterday, Ouattara declared a curfew from 5 pm until 6 am this morning. Today he announced another one, from noon today until 6 tomorrow morning. One therefore expects that in the coming hours the offensive will resume on a grand scale,” says our source. “The UN helicopters and the French military mission are guarding the city from above. We have seen several tanks from both parties in the streets, as well as rocket launchers,” continues our source.
In Duékoué, in the west of the Country, 800 civilians have been massacred during the “inter-community” riots, denounced the International Committee of the Red Cross, citing pro-Ouattara sources. Bishop Gaspard Béby Gnéba of Man, told Fides that he can not confirm this news, because communications are difficult, but insists that the humanitarian situation in the area is serious even if the fighting in that area has ceased (see Fides 1/04/2011).
In conclusion, Bishop Gnéba argues that in addition to civilian facilities, even those of the Church (parishes, schools, health facilities) have been destroyed and looted . (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 2/4/2011)

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