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AFRICA/CÔTE D'IVOIRE - Fighting continues in Abidjan; humanitarian situation worsens; Archbishop calls for peace prayers

Abidjan (Agenzia Fides) - “Bombing around the presidential residence has gone on throughout the night. Here at the Nunciature (200 metres from Gbagbo's residence), the shots were felt very strongly,” Archbishop Ambrose Madtha, Apostolic Nuncio in Abidjan, tells Fides, who together with the personnel in the Nunciature, has remained in place despite the fighting.
Even today, 11 April, fighting continues in the district of Abidjan, around the home of outgoing President of Côte d'Ivoire, Laurent Gbagbo, where he has remained barricaded for at least 11 days, refusing to surrender. Last night UN mission and French Licorne helicopters launched rockets at the residence, destroying it in part, to “neutralize the heavy artillery” of Gbagbo, as provided by Resolution 1975 of the UN Security Council.
“We thank God that we still have electricity and running water, as well as a supply of food,” says Archbishop Madtha. However, the Nuncio's thought go to the thousands of displaced people in Abidjan. “In every parish in the city there are large numbers of displaced people forced to flee their homes because of the shootings and bombings. Only those who experience it can understand what this means.”
Archbishop Madtha confirms that helicopters were used in the assault on Gbagbo's residence: “The helicopters launched missiles. Aircraft continues to fly over the area where we are. We are not able to see what damage has been done to the presidential residence, but we saw smoke rising from that direction.
“We did not sleep all night because of the bombing. We are all tired and anxious. We are collecting detailed information on the humanitarian situation which is certainly very serious, because food is scarce,” concludes Archbishop Jean-Pierre Kutwa of Abidjan, ending the telephone call to Fides with a request for peace prayers for Côte d'Ivoire. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 11/4/2011)

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