



AFRICA/SUDAN-Stop violence that affects defenseless civilians: Appeal on behalf of the Sudan Ecumenical Forum

El Obeid (Agenzia Fides) – In less than a month Southern Sudan will be an independent state, and a new humanitarian crisis is likely to erupt in the territories. In a statement released by ANS says that the Sudan Ecumenical Forum (SEF), a network of peace of all Christian churches in the country, calls for immediate intervention by international agencies to stop the violence affecting civilians. The United Nations estimates 40,000 people are fleeing the state of South Kordofan, and in particular the town of Kadugli, because of clashes between the army of the north, the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), and members of the armed group of the former southern rebels, the "Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) (see Fides 07/06/2011 and 06/09/2011). Bombardments were heard over the city of Kauda and areas of Heiban and Um Dorain. Aircraft at low altitude terrorize the displaced who seek shelter in the headquarters of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), located on the northern border of Kadugli. Many people in the city have been shut up in their homes, without food or water for fear of attacks, while those who have taken refuge outside the city, on the hills of the Nuba Mountains, are now hunted by helicopters.

According to a statement released by the EDF, some witnesses report that the troops of the SAF are going through Kadugli house to house looking for suspects, who are sometimes killed immediately on the spot, and even the SPLA forces are accused of atrocities. "The international community, led by the UN Security Council, with explicit and specific support in particular by China, the United States, African Union, Arab League and the European Union, must urgently take all necessary measures to stop the hostilities, protect civilians and allow humanitarian access to all parts of South Kordofan, as a first step to re-engage the political and military factions in conflict, seeking a negotiated solution", said Co-Chairman of the EDF, Eberhard Hitzler.

In the same statement among the priorities pointed out is the creation of a "no-fly zone" on the state of Kordofan, to put international operators in a position to bring relief, and provide adequate protection for civilians in the United Nations mission of Kaduqli. Currently violence, ransacking and fires are endangering the lives of over 300 000 people living in Kordofan. The city of El Obeid in the centre of the country, where the Salesians are working, has become a place of refuge for many displaced persons. The situation is difficult and, in the tense atmosphere, school activities have been suspended. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 06/14/2011)