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AFRICA/MALAWI - "You cannot suffocate civil society and democracy", warns the President of the Episcopal Conference

Lilongwe (Agenzia Fides) - The police have intensified controls in the major cities in Malawi although the protest planned for yesterday, August 17 was postponed (see Fides 17/8/2011). Opposition parties have given the government a month to respond to their requests. Otherwise a national demonstration of protest has been called for September 17. Even
the prayer vigil organized by religious communities in the country, which should have been held in conjunction with the event, was postponed.
On 16 August, however, a prayer meeting at Comesa Hall in Blantyre was held.
"There were representatives of Christian churches and Islamic community in the big room, who even in the month of Ramadan and fasting wanted to be present" , says Fr. Piergiorgio Gamba to Fides, a Monfort missionary who has been living and working in the country for decades.
"On this occasion, the religious communities showed a great maturity in faith. Churches are concerned about the fears of the population, and were able to report to the President in person what people are still not allowed to say freely", says the missionary.
The theme of the prayer was "A Nation Seeking God's Intervention in Forgiveness, Reconciliation and Peace", "Different preachers spoke, alternating with the choir who sang the psalms", continues Fr. Gamba. " Everyone emphasized that a storm is devastating Malawi and risks destroying the Country's future. But it was Mgr. Joseph Mukasa Zuza’s sermon, Bishop of Mzuzu and President of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi, which analyzed the problem concerning the clash between the ruling class and the people of Malawi. Mgr. Zuza said, among other things, in his homily that the Presidency must stop suffocating civil society, the press, the judiciary power and democracy".
"The Catholic Church were able to write a page worthy of the pastoral letter of 1992 (which was the go-ahead for the process of return of democracy after a long dictatorship). Twenty years later this church has become an adult and deserves all the respect of the faithful and the Country " concludes the missionary. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 18/08/2011)

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