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AFRICA/BURUNDI - The Bishops after the 18 September massacre: "May these moments of trial do not become an occasion of hatred that threatens to plunge Burundi in a spiral of revenge"

Bujumbura (Agenzia Fides) - The Bishops of Burundi expressed "dismay and sorrow" for the victims of the attack in a bar in Gatumba, in the municipality of Mutimbuzi in the province of Bujumbura, carried out by unknown assailants on the night of Sept. 18, which caused numerous deaths. In a statement of which a copy was sent to Fides, the Episcopal Conference of Burundi "begs" also "the State authorities to avoid assimilating opponents to enemies, and not to fall into the logic of violence that would put the Country in a violent spiral ". The Bishops also address an appeal to "all citizens to preserve unity, so that these moments of trial do not become an occasion of hatred that threatens to plunge Burundi in a spiral of revenge".
In a statement from the Independent National Commission of Human Rights (INCHR), whose president is brother Emmanuel Ntakarutimana, a Dominican religious, the dynamics of the attack are reconstructed: the assailants attacked the bar "Chez les amis" around 7.45pm, local time on September 18. The group killed " several people with weapons, bullets and grenades, some of which were saved because they had the readiness to hide in the toilet". According to information gathered by INCHR, on 19 September, 22 people died on the spot, including a child, and other 15 died in the four hospitals where the injured were hospitalized. "This attack - continues the document sent to Fides - comes in the wake of several cases of shootings in some parts of the Country where the bodies were discovered and, in most cases, no investigation shed light on the circumstances in which the victims were killed, and did not help identify the perpetrators in order to bring them before justice".
"The fresh outbreak of violence is part of the resurgence of armed groups that commit serious crimes such as those of Gatumba", warns the INCHR, which also emphasizes that "the results of the elections in May 2010 led to a troubled socio-political climate".
To overcome this situation, the INCHR asks the government to protect the population and to ensure the perpetrators of these crimes to justice; the political forces to promote a culture of peace and democracy and to ensure that their youth movements do not become prey to those who do not respect the dignity of the person; for media and civil society to inform the public with ethical practice, to intensify educational efforts for peace and respect for human rights, and finally to the international community to continue to support Burundi in its efforts for peace and economic development. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 21/09/2011)

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