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AFRICA/MALAWI - Hopes for Malawi with the election of the new President of Zambia

Lilongwe (Agenzia Fides) - "Malawi is becoming a police state", denounces Fr. Piergiorgio Gamba to Fides, a Monfort missionary, who has been living and working in Malawi for 30 years. "Now the only concern is to ensure the succession to power, which in 2014 should go to President Bingu wa Mutharika's brother, Arthur Peter Mutharika".

In a Country gripped by a severe economic and political crisis, violence against opponents does not stop. The last case, recalls the missionary is that of Robert Chasowa, 25 years old, vice president of the Youth for Freedom and Democracy. "Thrown from the fourth floor of his school on the night of Sept. 24, his case was immediately categorized by the police as a suicide. As evidence, letters were found, with a message for his father. A letter that his father had rejected as not authentic" said Fr. Gamba.

The recent election in neighboring Zambia of the opposition leader Michael Sata, Head of State, represents according to Fr. Gamba, a reason for hope in Malawi, "which often seems to reproduce the events in Zambia with striking similarities."

Malawi's opposition parties say that Sata's victory is "a new breath for a change of policy", explains the missionary. "Sata won not only with the promise of giving the Country economic growth in general, but also a real human development with better salaries, social services adapted to the conditions in which people live (it is not enough to talk about 7% annual growth of the Gross Domestic Product when in fact at a village level there is no improvement), space for free elections and decentralization of political power".

His election is also important because in 2007 Michael Sata was arrested at Chileka, south of Blantyre, without a plausible reason, by order of President Bingu wa Mutharika, judged as "an undesired persona" and expelled from the Country. At the base of the measure it is very likely that there were contacts Sata was making with the opposition. "The trial for that fact has not yet finished, and Malawi had to resort to a paragraph of the law under which the charge lapses when the accused becomes the President of his Country", concludes the missionary, according to which this circumstance is a further step in the growing international isolation of Malawi. (L.M.)

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