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Fondata nel 1927
Organo di informazione delle Pontificie Opere Missionarie
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AFRICA/LIBERIA - "If we want to unite the Country we should start from the poor": a missionary on the re-election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

Monrovia (Agenzia Fides) - "Even the international media, wonders what credibility an election has in which only 37% of the voters voted", says to Fides Fr. Mauro Armanino, of the Society of African Missions (SAM), who lived in Liberia for several years, where the outgoing President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf won the presidential ballot, however, boycotted by the other contender Winston Tubman, who had urged voters not to vote for alleged fraud committed in the first round (see Fides 8 and 9/11/2011).
The choice carried out by Sirleaf to seek Prince Jonhnson's vote to win the second round was criticized by many. Jonhnson was until 1989 Charles Taylor's former ally (who now is on trial for his involvement in war crimes in the neighboring Sierra Leone), when he was the leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). In 1990 Jonhnson created his militia, the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), which during the civil war, conquered the capital Monrovia. Jonhnson is accused of having personally witnessed the killing of former President Samuel Doe by his subordinates in September 1990.
Jonhnson, who presented himself in the first round of presidential elections, then decided to support Sirleaf in the second round. Both Sirleaf and Jonhnson were included in the list of 50 people involved in the civil war, who according to the recommendations of the final report of the 2009 "Truth and Reconciliation Commission", should not take political positions for the next 30 years. The "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" was created under the peace agreements of 2003 which put an end to civil war.
"How can we unite the country by relying on a person like Jonhnson" asks Fr. Armanino. "There was only a political calculation to get the votes of the Nimba County, where Jonhnson comes from. This county is important because it is the most populated and was a source of instability in the past. Sirleaf wants to 'recover' this County to unite the Country. But as I said before (see Fides 08/11/2011), these elections will divide the Country. If we want to unite the country - continues the missionary – it is necessary not to play at an ethnic level but at a political level, starting from the poor, and this was not done in any way in these years, except indirectly, by ensuring that minimum stability needed to implement any development project".
"The fact that there is no shooting is remarkable, but the price of all this is the uninterrupted presence since 2003 of thousands of foreign troops, first in West Africa and then the UN. A presence that continues due to the instability in the neighboring Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea Conakry. Being a democracy that needs 12-13 thousand peacekeepers in a Country that has 4 million inhabitants, is one thing that makes you think", concludes Father Armanino. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 11/11/2011)

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