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AFRICA/LIBERIA - A Catholic nun at the head of the Commission of Inquiry on electoral violence

Monrovia (Agenzia Fides) - The re-elected President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has appointed a religious Catholic, Sister Mary Laurene Browne, OSF, at the head of a commission of inquiry into the violence on November 7, on the eve of the second round of presidential elections. The clashes between police and the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) supporters, the party of the other candidate on the ballot, Winston Tubman, had caused a few deaths and several injuries. Following the clashes Tubman had retired from competition, calling on voters to boycott the elections, saying they were marred by fraud.
Sirleaf (who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize a few days before the first round of the presidential election) was re-elected with 90.7% of the votes in the second round, for which only 38.6% of voters voted, according to the final figures published by the electoral commission.
"Sister Browne has a deep knowledge of the country's history, because she lived through the various stages of the civil war from within", says Fr. Mauro Armanino, of the Society of African Missions (SMA) to Fides, who lived in Liberia for several years. "She is a person who also has an important intellectual role, being Headmistress of the Catholic Stella Maris Polytechnic, and is part of the Board of the University of Monrovia. She was also very close to His Exc. Mgr. Michael Francis. "Sister Browne loves her Country deeply and sincerely. I do not remember the exact year, maybe in 2004, Sister Browne had given a speech on the anniversary of national independence", said Fr Mauro.
"The appointment is also an important recognition of the role that the Catholic Church has had and has in the Liberian transition. However, in my opinion-continues the missionary-this recognition has had a price to pay, namely, that at a prophetic level nothing has been said and that the poverty of the most deprived has not diminished". Since both Sirleaf and Tubman have supported some of those who were responsible for the civil war, I repeat that this election leaves Liberia more divided than before", said Father Mauro. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 16/11/2011)

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