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AFRICA/CONGO DR - Tension on the eve for the announcement of the winner of the presidential elections, the Bishops launch an appeal for calm

Kinshasa (Agenzia Fides) – To go by the results emerged from the polls in the transparency of the procedures; to avoid violence and to severely punish any electoral fraud. This is the appeal launched by the Congolese Episcopal Conference (CENCO) in the aftermath of the presidential and legislative elections held on November 28. In a statement signed by the members of the Standing Committee of the CENCO says, "we immediately invite the Congolese people, political protagonists and the INEC (Independent Electoral Commission) to strictly adhere to the truth of the polls. To ensure the serenity and credibility of the results, as stipulated in article 63 of the electoral law, their partial publication must mention the number of members, that of actual voters, the spoiled ballot papers and votes obtained by each candidate. The CENCO calls that proven frauds are to be severely punished".
The Congolese bishops say they can make these considerations on the basis of the effort made by CENCO to ensure the legality of the vote. The Catholic Church has in fact deployed 30,000 Congolese election observers on much of the territory of the Democratic Republic of Congo. "Since it was established that these observers were arranged in pairs in each polling station, they could not cover the 23.9% of all seats provided" the statement said. "So far, about 6,000 observers equipped with modern means of communication, the CENCO recorded 46% of answers" on the basis of which the Bishops have issued this first statement.
The CENCO welcomes the participation of citizens to vote, but "while acknowledging the efforts of INEC, to hold elections on the scheduled date in very difficult conditions," it sadly notes that "its observers reported cases of irregularities, fraud attempts and scenes of violence". In the tense atmosphere for the pending publication of the final results of the vote, scheduled for December 6, the Bishops invite all to be calm, the political forces to respect the outcome of the vote and the armed forces and police to remain neutral and to refrain from all forms of violence and abuse. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 05/12/2011)

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