



AFRICA/SENEGAL - On the eve of the vote the atmosphere is tense, the Church offers a third of electoral observers

Dakar (Agenzia Fides) - "The atmosphere is tense, to the point that private schools in Dakar have canceled classes until after the vote," local Church sources told Fides from the capital of Senegal, where next Sunday, February 26, the presidential election will be held.

On 21 February, the pop singer and activist of the opposition, Youssou N'Dour, was wounded in the leg during an unauthorized demonstration in Dakar against incumbent President Wade, who contested the elections for a third term. "Yesterday and today there have not been any incidents. The African Union mission, led by former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, arrived yesterday in Dakar, has probably played a role in calming tempers. The African delegation has met all the members of the opposition," said sources of Fides.

"The demonstrations are promoted by the opposition movement M23 that aims to postpone the elections, but it will be difficult for them to succeed, because there is no specific constitutional provision that allows it" continues our source.

With regard to tensions with the Muslim Brotherhood Tidjane (see Fides 20/02/2012), it seems that on this problem calm has been restored after the Great Khalif appealed for calm to his followers. "The population is tired of the tensions and violence, which considers alien to its own history" underline our sources.

The Catholic Church is bringing its contribution so that the elections are conducted properly.

"Out of about 3,000 local electoral observers, one third are Catholics" emphasize sources of Fides. "The authorities have recognized 850 observers presented by the Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace through the local Caritas, which has a civil juridical personality recognized by the State. The scouts are half and half are Catholic voluntary associations. They are well organized and attended a training course. They have already put it into practice, following the vote held in the barracks (the army has in fact already voted)."

"Only 30% of the military voted. Perhaps an indication of what will happen with the civilian population that seems to show little enthusiasm after a tense election campaign, marked by controversy over the outgoing President, and by divisions within the opposition", say our sources. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 23/2/2012)