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AFRICA/MALAWI - Ultimatum to the President: the political clash in Malawi heightens

Lilongwe (Agenzia Fides) – Resignation of President Bingu wa Mutharika within 60 days or, alternatively, the Head of State should submit to a referendum within 3 months, otherwise the people will be invited to a campaign of civil disobedience. This is the ultimatum at the end of a civil society meeting chaired by the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) in the Cathedral of Limbe, ancient Episcopal seat of the first Vicar Apostolic, Louis Auneau, of the Shire Vicariate, and today the center of Catholicism of the Archdiocese of Blantyre.
"March 14 and 15 become two important days in the history of Malawi," writes to Fides Fr. Piergiorgio Gamba, a Monfortan missionary who has been living and working in Malawi for decades, referring to the meeting that took place, recalls the missionary, "20 years after the Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter of 1992, when Catholics on their own were leading the popular revolt against the then dictator Hastings Kamuzu Banda". "This year's meeting was ecumenical, with the participation of all the Churches, and was a meeting open to the media and to social communications. The only absent was the ruling party and its loyalists " says the missionary.
The final document of the meeting reads: "Driven by signals present in our society that show the current governmental crisis of politics, economics and constitutional field, and inspired by the prophetic mandate that our God has left us, convinced that God does not change the conditions of his people's lives without them being committed to changing them, we made a serious and critical analysis, guided by relevant questions that should be heeded if we are to reclaim our future as a nation".
The document denounces the state of the Nation, in particular as regards to the progress of the economy and respect for democratic rules. The government reacted by rejecting the ultimatum of the PAC and has intensified its campaign against the opposition. Atupele Muluzi, son of former President Bakili Muluzi, was arrested after clashes between police and some of his supporters, accused of having set fire to a police station. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 21/3/2012)

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