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AMERICA/HAITI - Fire "suspects" to throw out the displaced: the denunciation of the social groups in Haiti

Port au Prince (Agenzia Fides) - The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) has published the complaint of a "Collective" which brings together some of Haiti's civil society organizations on what happened last March 24: A series of "suspicious" fires in some camps for displaced people in the Haitian capital, Port au Prince. Behind the fire there seems be some owners of land on which camps for the displaced (tent city) were set up after the earthquake on January 12, 2010, with the intention of sending away displaced people.
On 18 March a group of criminals had invaded the field "Kozbami" in Cite Soleil (the largest slum of Port au Prince) and had set fire to six tents. This criminal act dates back to last year, when, according to the "Collective", "the night of December 21, 2011, a group of criminals had entered the camp Place Jeremie to destroy the tents, beat the displaced and force them to leave the camp". From February to mid March this year 2012, 166 tents in several camps have been burned down, killing six displaced people, including 3 children, according to the bulletin of the group for the defense of the right to housing, which also includes the office of the Jesuits (Jesuit Refugee Service, JRS) in Port au Prince.
Another fire, which caused a great tragedy occurred on March 12, when "a hundred tents were burned in the courtyard of the high school, Toussaint Louverture, in the center of the Capital". Five people were burned alive, including a mother with her two sons aged 12 and 10.
In the face of these criminal acts that violate the rights to life and security of displaced persons in various camps, the "Collective" denounced the indifference and silence of the Haitian authorities. The context of post-quake Haiti is still marked by the slow process of construction of half a million displaced people in the capital Port-au-Prince and its surroundings. From January to February 2012, the number of displaced people dropped from 515,960 to 490,545 and the number of camps has been reduced from 707 to 660, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Despite this reduction, the IOM is concerned that by the end of 2012 there will be over 310,000 people still in camps. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 30/3/2012)

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