



## **AFRICA/SIERRA LEONE - "Justice is done, but those who helped Taylor to sell blood diamonds should also be condemned," says a missionary**

Freetown (Agenzia Fides) - "The greatest satisfaction is that a trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity involved a former Head of State and that he has been convicted. In this way, justice, albeit slowly, was carried out," says to Fides Fr. Gerardo Caglioni, a Xaverian missionary with a long experience in Sierra Leone, after the International Criminal Court in The Hague convicted the former Liberian President Charles Taylor of war crimes and crimes against humanity. He was found guilty of aiding and abetting war crimes committed in Sierra Leone during the civil war (1991-2002). The Court ruled that Taylor provided material aid, assistance and moral support to the rebels of the RUF (Revolutionary United Front) active in Sierra Leone, and had substantial influence, but did not exercise command and control on the structure. Taylor was then found guilty of aiding and abetting for all eleven crimes of which he was accused, among which are: acts of terrorism, murder, violence, rape, sexual slavery, human indignity, recruitment of children and looting.

"Taylor used the now famous 'blood diamonds' to finance the war," explained Fr. Caglioni. "While not directly involved in the control of the RUF, he was still an indispensable tool. Taylor sold the Sierra Leonean diamonds from the RUF on international markets and provided weapons." From Liberia, where he was Head of State, Taylor put the 'Sierra Leonean diamonds on the market passing them off for Liberians. In Monrovia he was also head of the smuggling network that supplied weapons to the RUF.

The missionary then remarked that "justice should be done in another direction. I am talking about foreign companies that put on the international market, through the intermediary of Taylor, the RUF diamonds. Without the cooperation of these companies, the war in Sierra Leone would not have happened." "Several other people contributed directly or indirectly to the war: buying those diamonds made the recruitment of child soldiers and other war crimes possible," concluded Fr. Caglioni. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 27/4/2012)