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ASIA/SYRIA - "The desolation of Homs and the war of information ": the words of a greek-catholic Archimandrite

Damascus (Agenzia Fides) - "Peace in Syria could be saved if everyone told the truth. After a year of conflict, the reality on the ground is far from the picture that imposes disinformation in Western media": says a testimony sent to Fides Agency by the French priest Philip Tournyol Clos, a greek-Catholic Melkite Archimandrite, who recently visited Syria, by traveling to different cities, like Damascus, Aleppo and Homs.
In Homs, called the "martyred city", "opposition forces have occupied two areas, Diwan Al Bustan and Hamidieh, where there are all the churches and bishoprics," the Archimandrite told Fides. "The picture for us – he continues - is utter desolation: the church of Mar Elian is half destroyed and that of Our Lady of Peace is still occupied by the rebels. Christian homes are severely damaged due to the fighting and completely emptied of their inhabitants, who fled without taking anything. The area of Hamidieh is still shelter to armed groups independent of each other, heavily armed and bankrolled by Qatar and Saudi Arabia. All Christians (138,000) have fled to Damascus and Lebanon, while others took refuge in the surrounding countryside. A priest was killed and another was wounded by three bullets. Still a couple live there, but the five bishops have had to take refuge in Damascus and Lebanon. "The Christian leader continues: "In the capital car bombs and assassinations on behalf of Islamist suicide bombers, drawn by the desire of heaven, that cradle the dream of the end of the Alawite regime are feared. Currently the country, through the bloody work of adventurers who are not Syrian is trying to be destabilized. The former French ambassador, Eric Chevallier, reported this information, which was always rejected, while many details remain to be forged to keep the war against Syria," denounced the Archimandrite to Fides. In Damascus in recent weeks, there were terrible attacks that ended with a toll: of 130 deaths (including 34 Christians), 400 injured and many houses damaged. "The consternation was general, indescribable pain," notes the Archimandrite, recalling that "the Syrians are simple and playful people." As far as Christians are concerned the Bishop says: "Christians live in peace, sharing the sufferings of all, but they are ready to admit that they have never felt so free in the past and to remember the full recognition of their rights, given to them by this government." Mgr. Philip Tournyol Clos says the key to Syrian Christian and Muslim leaders, who say: "The enemies of Syria have enlisted some of the Muslim Brotherhood in order to destroy the brotherly relations that traditionally existed between Muslims and Christians: Yet, to date,they are not able to: they have provoked a contrary reaction and the two communities are more united than before." The Syrian soldiers in fact, continue to face foreign fighters, mercenaries Libyans, Lebanese militants from the Gulf, Afghans, Turks. "The Sunni Salafist militants - he added - continue to commit crimes against civilians, or to recruit fighters with force. The fanatical Sunni extremists are fighting a holy war proudly, especially against the Alawites. When terrorists seek to control the religious identity of a suspect, they ask him to cite the genealogies dating back to Moses. And they ask to recite a prayer that the Alawites removed. The Alawites have no chance to get out alive." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 04/06/2012)

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