



AFRICA/LIBYA - "Libya is free, but it is a freedom that must be conquered," said Bishop Martinelli

Tripoli (Agenzia Fides) - "The situation is calm again. When we left this morning at 7 am after Mass, we did not notice anything special " said His Exc. Mgr. Giovanni Innocenzo Martinelli, Apostolic Vicar of Tripoli to Fides, where yesterday the tension had increased after the militia had occupied the civilian airport. The assault was led by Brigadier Al-Awfea of Tarhuna, a town 80 miles southeast of Tripoli, who calls for the release of one of his leaders, who has disappeared in unclear circumstances in Tripoli. After the occupation, air traffic was blocked. After a few hours the Deputy Minister of the Interior, Omar al-Khadrawi, announced that the authorities had regained control of the airport. The Deputy Minister said that dozens of assailants were arrested and their weapons confiscated.

"This is an episode that is part of an internal dialogue that must be built, hoping that dialogue is reached by abandoning weapons. Libya is free, but it is a freedom that must be re-conquered. It is continuous training to learn how to dialogue," underlines Mgr. Martinelli.

Tensions in Tripoli and Benghazi (where yesterday evening there were clashes between the military police and a local brigade) appear to be related to the elections for the Constituent Assembly, scheduled for mid-June but will likely be postponed. "The common opinion is that the elections will be postponed to July before the start of Ramadan," said Mgr. Martinelli. The Apostolic Vicar of Tripoli remains confident, however, on the evolution of Libya, and ensures that "the Catholic community continues its journey and service to the Libyan people with courage. Let us make Pope Benedict XVI's exhortation our own: "courage", fully accepting his words." (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 05/06/2012)