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AFRICA/COTE D'IVOIRE - Civilians fleeing the south-west after the killing of 7 "Blue Helmets"

Abidjan (Agenzia Fides) - The population is fleeing their villages in the south-west of Côte d'Ivoire after the ambush on 8 June that claimed the lives of seven "Blue Helmets", from Niger, of the UN Force in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). The attack, carried out near the town of Tai, 8 civilians were also killed and a military of the Ivorian army.

"Local newspapers are talking openly about the actions of Liberian mercenaries recruited by people associated with former President Gbagbo," say local Church sources to Fides. "The west of the Ivory Coast since the civil war (which lasted on and off from 2002 to 2011) has been experiencing a profound instability, due to the presence of armed groups recruited on the border between Liberia and Ivory Coast." According to some sources, the Liberian-Ivorian militias assign even some child soldiers in their ranks. In April 2011 Gbagbo was deposed and arrested by UN troops (supported by the French) after a long dispute with current President Ouattara on the results of the presidential elections.

The British newspaper "The Guardian" reports the opinion of some Ivorian officials, according to which the funds to recruit and arm militias that operate in the west of the Country come from Ghana, where many refugees are members of the Gbagbo regime. "It is difficult to verify this information. I remember that at the time of the clash between current President Gbagbo and Ouattara, someone said that Ghana supported the latter to destabilize Cote d'Ivoire, in order to attract foreign investments in the Ghanaian oil industry and not in the Ivorian, but they are just rumors, which have not yet been confirmed," concludes the source of Fides. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 11/6/2012)

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