



## **AFRICA/SOUTH SUDAN - "Sudan and South Sudan must live in peace" message of the Catholic and Anglican Bishops a year after independence in southern Sudan**

Juba (Agenzia Fides) - "The relations between the governments of Sudan and Southern Sudan have deteriorated to an unacceptable level. We reject war as an option to resolve disputes, and we call on all parties to respect the cease-fire and to withdraw their forces from the border region." This is the appeal launched by His Exc. Mgr. Paulino Lukudu Loro, Catholic Archbishop of Juba, and by Mgr. Daniel Deng Bul, Episcopal Archbishop of Juba and Primate of the Episcopal Church of Sudan, in a joint message issued on the occasion of the first anniversary of the independence of South Sudan, which is celebrated today, July 9.

The two Christian leaders, praising the positive developments that have occurred over the last year, also expressed their fears about the deterioration of relations between Sudan and South Sudan, for inter-ethnic conflicts in South Sudan, and for the three civil wars ongoing in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

The message also mentions the unresolved issue of Abyei, oil-rich region disputed between the two States: "The Abyei Protocol of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (the 2005 agreement that allowed the referendum on independence in January 2011 of the South Sudan), provides the means to solve the problem of Abyei through a referendum." The tensions between Sudan and South Sudan have blocked exports of south Sudanese oil through the territory of Sudan, damaging the economy of both States. "Oil is a God-given resource that the two Countries should benefit from," remind the two Archbishops. "We call for a settlement based on international standards for the transportation of crude oil and to recognize the damage caused by the current impasse to the populations of both States. Prices are rising and there are shortages of essential goods, including fuel, which make life difficult for ordinary citizens "

Following the independence of South Sudan, several natives of the new State were expelled from Khartoum, a fact noted by the message in which concern over attacks against Christian buildings in Sudan is expressed (see chart).

As for South Sudan, the two religious leaders, while noting the progress made in the past year, highlight some serious problems the new State has to face such as corruption, ethnic tensions and problems with some neighboring States. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 09/07/2012)