



ASIA/SYRIA - Towards Reconciliation: more than 300 fighters ready to surrender in Homs

Homs (Agenzia Fides) - More than 300 fighters in the various armed factions of the Syrian opposition in Homs have agreed to surrender, to come under the protection of the interfaith People's Committee "Mussalaha" and continue an "unarmed political opposition." This is the result of a historic agreement promoted by the movement "Mussalaha" ("Reconciliation"), born spontaneously from Syrian civil society, which is gaining the confidence of all the warring parties, families, clans, communities, sectors of the government and armed opposition. The more than 300 armed are mostly young people who are barricaded in several streets in the old town of Homs such as Khalidiye, Jouret al shiyah, Qarabis, Hamidiyah, Bustan Diwan and surrounding areas, still besieged by the forces of the Syrian army. Overall, it is estimated that the armed fighters in that area of the old city are more than 1,000. The Committee of "Mussalaha" in Homs, which includes the Syrian Catholic priest Fr. Michel Naaman, and other Muslim religious leaders and several civil society leaders and community representatives, after a lengthy mediation effort, managed to achieve something unthinkable until yesterday. "The 300 young people ready to lay down arms are young teenagers who had decided to fight, due to the spirit and ideals of the revolution. Among them are relatives, children, friends, people that are part of Mussalaha and this has greatly facilitated dialogue and agreement. They are the children of the Syrian people," the priest of Homs told Fides.

Young people had warranties that the Syrian army, on laying down its arms, will be free and will be able to continue a "non-violent political opposition." The Committee of "Mussalaha" will be the guarantor of their safety and freedom, in an atmosphere that wants to encourage confrontation, dialogue and reconciliation. It is not excluded, the "Mussalaha" leaders noted, that many other fighters can follow this example and come under the tutelage of the Committee for reconciliation.

The main problem, note sources of Fides, is represented now by over 100 armed men who are not Syrian and are present in the area and who have no intention or possibility to qualify for this delicate operation of "internal Syrian dialogue." They demand the involvement of the Red Cross, so this is why representatives of the CRI are alerted for a possible intervention in the mediation. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 10/7/2012)