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AFRICA/SOMALIA - "I hope that Kismayo is not destroyed," says to Fides Mgr. Bertin

Mogadishu (Agenzia Fides) - "I hope that the Shabaab do as they have done elsewhere, they mingle among the civilian population and do not oppose strong resistance to the advance of the troops that are hunting them. If they were to resist instead, there is a risk that the city of Kismayo is destroyed " says to Fides Agency His Exc. Mgr. Giorgio Bertin, Bishop of Djibouti and Apostolic Administrator of Mogadishu. According to agency sources, the troops of Kenya, with the support of the Somali government, are advancing on three fronts towards Kismayo, the last major bastion in southern Somalia still in the hands of the Shabaab. The offensive is also conducted from the sea after Kenyan troops landed on a beach a few kilometers from the city center. The Kenyan military say that Kismayo has already been conquered, other sources instead say that the fighting is still going on.
"For weeks, there was a double advance both from the west, from Kenya, and from the east, across the road that from Mogadishu goes towards Kismayo, passing through Merca," recalls Mgr. Bertin. "Kismayo was also under siege from the sea and also bombed by the Kenyan aviation. Taking into account that the Shabaab were further divided, it was predictable that the fall of the city was a matter of days."
We ask Mgr. Bertin if the offensive led by Kenya (which brings together soldiers loyal to the government in Mogadishu and troops of the African Mission in Somalia, AMISOM) is also supported by the military units that have been crossing the Somali waters. "It is likely that there is an operation of military vessels sent to the area by various foreign powers to combat piracy. Formally, they could not intervene, but knowing that piracy was supported by some elements of the Shabaab, it is likely that these ships at least give logistical support, " says the Bishop.
According to some observers, the intervention of Kenya in Somalia which began a year ago, aims to create an additional administrative division (after Somaliland and Puntland) in the south of the Country, called Azania (or Jubland). "If this project really exists it would really be risky, because the situation is extremely fluctuating, taking into account the different clans and tribes that have fought this area. It is best to leave the matter in the hands of the Somalis, " concluded Mgr. Bertin. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 28/09/2012)

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