



ASIA/PHILIPPINES - Pregnant woman and two children massacred by the army in Mindanao

Columbium (Agenzia Fides) - A tribal family was massacred by the soldiers of the Philippine Army in the Columbio area (province of Sultan Kudarat), on the island of Mindanao in the southern Philippines. As confirmed by local sources of Fides, the victims are Juvy Capion, 27 years old, three months pregnant, and her two sons, Jordan Capion and John Mark Capion, 13 and 8 years of age. The three were killed on October 18 in their mountain farm. According to the reconstruction of Fides, the army was chasing Daguil Capion, Juvy's husband, known as the leader of "Pangayaw" (in local language "revenge"), a fighting initiative launched by indigenous communities against the large mining company "SMI-Xstrata." The man managed to escape, but his wife and children died under the fire of the military, part of the contingent which had the task of defending the company.

In some messages sent to Fides, different tribal groups, civil authorities, associations for human rights, the missionaries, the local Church, express outrage and deep sadness for what happened. Fr. Peter Geremia, PIME missionary, head of the tribal development programs in the Diocese of Kidapawan, remembers the pained tribal family, whom he knew personally. In a note sent to Fides, the missionary said, "The first term of the soldiers, according to their constitutional oath is to protect civilians. If they put at risk the lives of civilians, betray their oath, they are no longer soldiers in the Philippines, but mercenaries of a foreign company that pays them to kill anyone who stands in their way." The missionary turns to the military the cry launched by Mgr. Oscar Romero: "Please, I beg you, I command you in the name of God: stop killing your people."

In a heartfelt appeal to senior defense officials and President Benigno Aquino, Fr. Geremia says, "If ordered to kill people like Juvy and her sons, have you not lost your legitimacy? You can find the words to justify the rules of engagement, but you cannot justify this crime before God and before the people. Did you not know that there was a family at home? ". The mining company "SMI-Xstrata," according to the missionary, becomes "an accomplice in the killing of women and children. Gold, your millions, your hands are soaked in innocent blood. " Fr. Geremia concludes by quoting a passage from the Gospel: "Blessed are those who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, blessed are the peacemakers."

The massacre took place the day after the first anniversary of Fr. Fausto Tentorio's murder, a PIME missionary killed in Arakan on October 17, 2011. According to local activists of the movement "Justice for Fr Pops", the same Battalion, which trains soldiers and paramilitary groups "spread terror while claiming to promote peace and development." Although President Aquino has called for a thorough investigation into Fr. Tentorio's murder, so far there have not been any credible results because, according to activists, influential people, including some military, are blocking the investigation. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 25/10/2012)