



## **AFRICA/SUDAN - "Civilians of the Nuba Mountains victims of a forgotten war, only the Church is a beacon of hope," the complaint of Mgr. Gassis**

Khartoum (Agenzia Fides) - "The bombings are carried out on daily basis and what saddens me most is that even the universal Church seems to have forgotten us, the people of the Nuba Mountains. At least remember us in the prayers of the faithful during Sunday Masses!" This is the cry of pain entrusted to Fides Agency by His Exc. Mgr. Macram Max Gassis, Bishop of El Obeid, in whose territory falls the Nuba Mountains in South Kordofan, State of Sudan where for a long time a war has been going on between the government in Khartoum and the SPLA-North (Sudan People's Liberation Army-North).

"The first victims of this war are civilians, especially women, children and the elderly," said the Bishop. "Just the other day the church of Heban was bombed, which thankfully has reported limited damage. In the month of November, which has not finished yet, the aviation of Khartoum launched 330 bombs, which caused 36 deaths, mostly women and children, and 22 injuries. Only in this month 30 homes were destroyed and 92 crops."

"No humanitarian organization is present in the Nuba Mountains " complains Mgr. Gassis. "The Church is the only presence of hope for these people, with our sisters and four doctors and surgeons (2 Americans, a German and an English). The only medical facility in the area is the hospital which I founded, that of 80 patients for whom it was built is now home to over 500. We cannot build a new lane because we had to repatriate Kenyan workers and we do not have cement."

"My priests walk the paths that lead from the Nuba Mountains to our structure that we created in South Sudan in Yida in Unity State, to take supplies and medicines. The journey takes 8 hours to go and 8 to return, under the threat of Sudanese bombers. Only thanks to the courage of an Australian Sister of Mercy, of Italian origin, who has returned specifically, the formation and primary schools are still open.

Mgr. Gassis has just returned from a tour around the world to plead the cause of the people of the Nuba Mountains. "I was in Ireland, where I met the President and his predecessor, in London (where I was heard by the House of Commons and Lords, by the Episcopal Conference and was interviewed by the BBC), and then I went to Brussels, Paris , Berlin, Washington, New York, Oslo, Luxembourg and finally to Geneva, where I was heard by the Commission for Human Rights.

"To all I asked for the international community to impose on the regime in Khartoum to stop the bombing on civilians, and to allow food and medicine to be brought to the exhausted people," concluded Mgr. Gassis. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 29/11/2012)