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ASIA/SYRIA - A young Christian of the opposition: "Minorities crushed in the conflict"

Hassake (Agenzia Fides) - The minorities of the Syrian society, vulnerable and defenseless, are crushed in a conflict that grows in intensity, it establishes itself as being a struggle between different factions, sectarianism and confessionalism: This is what is said, in a note sent to Fides Agency by a young Christian, displaced with his family in Hassake, recounting the experience of the town of Ras al-Ain, a town on the border with Turkey, in upper Mesopotamia. The civilian population in the area beyond the Euphrates (Eastern Syria), has been devastated by the conflict that has resulted in an exodus of civilians, displaced above all in the cities of Hassake and Kamishly. From there, the local Bishops have sent an urgent appeal to the international community and the Pope, "to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe" (see Fides 22 and 23/11/2012). In Ras al-Ain, captured by the troops of the Free Army on 8 November, clashes between Kurdish and Arab military factions are currently underway, previously allied against the Syrian regular army, a sign of the general level of conflict which increases. The young Christian, who claims to be close to the Syrian opposition and requested anonymity for security reasons, explains to Fides the plight of minorities (Arabs, Kurds, Syrians, Assyrians, Christians) in Mesopotamia.
"In the middle of the night, at two on 8 November, residents of Ras al-Ain were awakened by the sound of explosions, of helicopters and machine guns. They were the fighters of the Free Army and Turkish helicopters reached Syrian territory and easily conquered the border crossing and the city. The military began to seize civilian homes to use them as fighting positions. My grandfather’s home was among those that were seized, where there were women, children and paralyzed grandmother. All Civilians were Expelled from their homes in pajamas, without being able to take documents, money or anything else. Military and combatants went further: with a 'black list', they went from one house to another looking for their enemies. Among these were the names of the heads of Christian families. Why? ".
"From what has been said – explains the young man - one should not conclude that our nation is divided by sectarian hatred. Without the intervention of one of my family’s neighbor, a Sunni Muslim who prayed the gunmen not to hurt us, we would have died. We are safe and we fled. The population of Ras al-Ain, Muslims and Christians, Arabs and Kurds, Syrians and Assyrians, lived in peace and brotherhood for decades. But now we want to put one against the other. Why? ".
The text continues: "In Ras al-Ain, the victims were not only Christians, but Christians were the only ones who were immediately expelled from their homes, carrying babies in their arms, put to flight the streets strewn with corpses. Such intervention is that of an army of invaders and not an army of liberators, as the Army of the opposition call themselves. "
The notes continues: "Kurds, Arabs and Christians, more than 70.000 people fled, mostly to Hassake. Within hours, the city became a ghost town. The Alawites had the worst destiny: killed because Alawites. One of the victims was a school teacher, who loved the city so much and for many years taught children of all families. Some militants found, captured and killed him in front of his wife and children, who were kidnapped. "
The dramatic story concludes: "Today the roads are blocked. A bus line between Hassaké and Aleppo was stopped and all passengers Identified, to eliminate those who are not Sunnis. But who gave the militia the order to kill on the basis of religion? And even if the criterion were not confessional, what right do they have to kill innocent Civilians? International law provides that, even in war, it is the duty of the conquerors to ensure the survival and rights of Civilians. But this principle does not seem to be included among those that regulate the military factions of rebels. Why? We have always accused the regime of these disasters. Now we talk about the crimes that we have seen with our eyes, perpetrated by the Free Syrian Army." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 30/11/2012)

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