



AFRICA/MALAWI - New food crisis in Malawi, denounces a missionary

Lilongwe (Agenzia Fides) - "In many parts of Malawi, the district of Balaka is among the most affected, so many people are starving," writes to Fides Agency Fr. Piergiorgio Gamba, Monfortan missionary who for over 30 years has been working in Malawi. The cause of this serious food crisis, said Fr. Gamba, were the irregular rainfalls of the previous season and the failure to resolve the economic crisis, despite the devaluation of the currency, all this has caused a significant loss of jobs and the high growth of prices of basic necessities.

The poorest are forced to eat the fish Bonya. "It is the smallest fish of Lake Malawi, which collected in large quantities was used to prepare feed for the chickens. Now it is the national food and the symbol of these past few months of hunger. Who once bought Chambo, the most valuable fish of Lake Malawi, now has to settle for what was considered scrap food," says Fr. Gamba.

The missionary also reports that "fuel now costs 1.4 euro per litre. Nobody trusts the Kwacha, the currency of Malawi which is left floating by the laws of the market, but is not able to revive the national economy."

Malawi is also at the center of a dispute with Tanzania for the demarcation of the border of Lake Malawi.

Tanzania, which overlooks its shores, says that the international border is in the middle of the lake. Malawi argues instead that it is entitled to the entire surface of the lake that is not in the Mozambique territory (the other State which shares with Lilongwe the control of the lake) until the area adjacent to the Tanzanian bank.

The President of Malawi Joyce Banda, who succeeded on April 5th to the late President Bingu wa Mutharika, after an initial phase of openness to dialogue with Tanzania has now taken an intransigent position. "The dispute has dragged on for months and threatens the stability of the region, there seems to be no room for dialogue. The President's message is that the lake cannot be touched: a test of strength that Joyce Banda cannot lose sight in view of the elections to be held in 2014 and also because the lake beds hide reserves of oil: one more reason not to surrender," said Fr. Gamba. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 03/12/2012)