



AFRICA/DR CONGO - New massacre in Masisi: "this area of North Kivu must also be protected," said the JRS

Kinshasa (Agenzia Fides) - At least 28 people were killed in Masisi since November 29, as a consequence of an on-going fighting between rival armed groups. This was denounced in a statement sent to Fides Agency by the Office of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) for the Great Lakes region. Masisi is an area rich in minerals in North Kivu, in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. The JRS remembers that since August, violent clashes among various rebels, as well as fighting between these rebel groups and the Congolese army has been on the rise. "Consequently, thousands of women, children and men have been displaced from their homes in Masisi. In addition, a climate of fear and reciprocal mistrust reigns between the two major communities living in the area, the Hundes and the Hutus."

According to information collected by JRS, on the night of November 29, members of the Nyatura, a Hutu militia, attacked Kihuma village inhabited by the Hundes, burning down houses and firing gunshots at Hunde villagers. Five people were murdered, including one in a nearby medical center. During the same day of the attack in Kihuma on November 29, young Hunde militiamen immediately reacted by killing 11 Hutu people in the surrounding area of Buabo, including five men who supposedly belonged to the Nyatura militia. The next day, twelve more people were killed during an armed incursion in various Hutu villages around Lushebere. Several houses were burned down and the population fled the village en masse.

JRS believes that it is an urgent priority for the international community, for the Congolese authorities, for the UN peacekeeping Mission (MONUSCO) and political protagonists in the Great Lakes region, to deal with the forgotten conflict in the Masisi region and ensure the protection of the local population. "We appreciate the on-going diplomatic efforts to stop the violence of the rebels who on November 20 took control of Goma, the capital of North Kivu, causing the flight of tens of thousands of people; the same determination is now necessary to restore peace and security to the population in Masisi, now exhausted by the conflict," said the Director of JRS Great Lakes, Isaac Kiyaka, SJ. (LM) (Agenzia Fides 05/12/2012)