



## **AFRICA/DR CONGO - A Comboni missionary beaten by the military for defending the pygmies**

Kinshasa (Agenzia Fides) - A Comboni missionary, Fr. Franco Laudani, was arrested and beaten by soldiers of the Congolese army (FARDC). This was denounced on the Congolese Bishops' Conference website. According to reports from the site, the incident took place on January 2 in the territory of Watsa in the Diocese of Wamba (Eastern Province). Fr. Franco had asked the military explanations on the arrest of some pygmies. In response, the soldiers arrested him and beat him. The missionary was later released. The Bishops in their site complain that the territory in question lives in uncertainty due to the violence committed by FARDC military (Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo).

The facts were confirmed to Fides Agency, recalling that Fr. Franco has been working for years for the pygmies, a population often victim of harassment and prejudice.

The Diocese of Wamba is located in the Eastern Province of the D.R. of Congo, with an area of 68,000 square kilometers and a population of about 600,000 inhabitants. The "Pygmy" population is around 40,000 people present almost everywhere in the seventeen parishes of the diocese. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 04/01/2013)