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AFRICA/CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC - Rebels accept "in principle" a cease-fire; the Bishops denounce the violence on both sides

Bangui (Agenzia Fides) - The rebels of the coalition Seleka have accepted the agreement in principle to a cease-fire for a week. The announcement was made in Libreville, capital of Gabon, which holds the peace talks between the authorities of the Central African Republic and the rebels. The latter seem to have decided not to ask for the resignation of President François Bozizé as a precondition for negotiations. In recent days, representatives from Seleka had also asked Bozizéto be indicted by the International Criminal Court "for war crimes and crimes against humanity."

The negotiations are expected to continue in the Gabonese capital in the presence of some Heads of State that are part of the Community of Central African States, the regional organization that mediates in crisis and has deployed a peacekeeping force in the Central African Republic to separate the two contenders. The rebels demand, in exchange for a cease-fire, the start of what they call "South African mercenaries" (South Africa has sent 400 soldiers to the aid of Bozizé) and the release of political prisoners.

Meanwhile, in a message to the nation, the Central African Bishops denounce violence against civilians in the areas conquered by the rebels Seleka (including the forced recruitment of children as soldiers) and arbitrary detention committed in the capital, Bangui, on behalf of security forces . The Bishops call for an immediate ceasefire, the opening of humanitarian corridors to deliver aid to the people of the areas conquered by the rebels and conflict resolution through dialogue. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 11/01/2013)

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