



AFRICA/LIBYA - Two religious communities forced to leave Cyrenaica, complaint by Mgr. Martinelli, "In coming days we expect difficult times"

Tripoli (Agenzia Fides) - "Two religious communities leave Cyrenaica after being pressured by fundamentalists" is the complaint made to Fides Agency by His Exc. Mgr. Giovanni Innocenzo Martinelli, Apostolic Vicar of Tripoli, who reports that in the east of Libya, "the situation is critical."

"On February 20, large-scale demonstrations throughout Cyrenaica are expected so the Apostolic Vicar of Benghazi has been warned to leave the church from 13 February to take shelter" continues Mgr. Martinelli. The Apostolic Vicar of Tripoli traces the picture of the Church in Cyrenaica. "In past days the Congregation of the Holy Family of Spoleto who had been there for nearly 100 years were forced to abandon Derna, and a Polish Salesian priest, who was abused by some fundamentalists. In Beida another women's religious community was forced to escape even if in this case, for internal reasons. In Barce the Franciscan Sisters of the Child Jesus will leave their home in coming days. "

"Here in Tripoli so far the situation is relatively calm, but in Cyrenaica, the atmosphere is very tense," said Mgr. Martinelli, who adds: "We regret having to reduce our activities in that area because we have built a very strong and beautiful relationship, made of testimony and friendship with the Libyan people, which unfortunately in recent times has been affected by the presence of fundamentalists. These do not represent the identity of the Libyan people but an expression of Libyan society today."

"As a Church we will take our precautions, but we cannot abandon the Christians who remain here. Two religious communities will remain in Benghazi, a small community in Tobruk and finally another small community of Indian sisters in Beida," said Mgr. Martinelli, who concludes: " We remain impoverished, but full of hope that one day our communities will resume force. " (LM.) (Agenzia Fides 31/01/2013)