



ARICA/TANZANIA - Islamist extremist groups warn Christians: "The coming Easter will be one of disaster"

Geita (Agenzia Fides) – “We thank our young men, trained in Somalia, for killing an infidel. Many more will die. We will burn homes and churches. We have not finished: at Easter, be prepared for disaster”; Signed “Muslim Renewal”. Fides was told about a terrifying SMS in Tanzania, received by local bishops and priests, in which Islamist extremists claim responsibility for the murder of the Catholic priest Fr. Evarist Mushi, aged 55, killed in front of the Catholic cathedral early on Sunday 17 February.

The Catholic Church in Tanzania is concerned and anxious. Reaction has come also from national leaders: Tanzania’s Prime Minister called an immediate meeting with leading members of the Christian and Muslim communities, but the outcome was not positive. Certain Muslim leaders called for the release from prison of the suspected assassins of a local Protestant pastor, Mathew Kachira, killed on 10 February. Local Catholic Church sources told Fides that clearly, behind these attacks and murders lies Islamist extremism spreading across the country.

Fides sources also say that some responsibility falls on Tanzania’s president, Mr Jakaya Kikwete, because during the electoral campaign he promised the Muslim population he would change the Constitution and introduce measures in keeping with Islamic Sharia Law. Today the majority of Tanzanians oppose the plan, but Islamist extremist groups, in reaction, have started a campaign of terror.

The local Catholic Bishop of Geita, Bishop Damiani Denis Dallu, told Fides: “All we desire is peace and unity and love to reign among the citizens of Tanzania, irrespective of religious beliefs”. This is also the desire of other Christian leaders, heads of traditional religions and moderate Muslim leaders. The latter, however, the Bishop told Fides “are afraid because they too are targeted by Islamic extremists”. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 18/2/2013)