



AFRICA/TANZANIA - Music to promote tolerance, but Christians feel under fire

Zanzibar City (Agenzia Fides) - Rediscovering music as an instrument of unity, dialogue, tolerance and harmony: Swahili music festival, "Sounds of Wisdom", just ended in Zanzibar, sent a message of brotherhood, inviting to "break down barriers between Muslims and Christians, between whites and blacks." But among the Christian community fear still circulates after the murder of the Catholic priest Fr. Evariste Mushi, 55, who was killed last February 17, the Bishop of Zanzibar, His Exc. Mgr. Augustine Shao, denounced: "It is clear that we are in the sights of Islamic fundamentalists," confiding in the society "Aid to the Church in Need" his concerns and the lack of trust in the government for the protection of the Christian community. Priests and faithful continue to receive warnings and threats from extremists who sign themselves as "Muslim Renewal " while some observers suggest the existence of a link between violence and the militant group "Al-Shabaab." "Religion is exploited for political ends," remarked the Anglican Bishop Emeritus John Ramadhani, pointing out that Islam and Christianity coexisted harmoniously on the island for over a century.

Meanwhile, investigators have arrested nine people suspected of the involvement in the murder of Fr. Mushi, while the police control several "hot spots" of the island. Fides sources note that the civil authorities are trying to minimize what happened, for fear that the rumors of the spread of terrorism may discourage tourism on the island. Zanzibar is an island with a Muslim majority and it is estimated that Christians account for 5% of the population. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 26/02/2013)