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ASIA/SYRIA - In Aleppo Christians fleeing rebel-held areas. A fatwa "authorizes" to rape women who are not Sunni

Aleppo (Agenzia Fides) - The conquest of the district of Cheikh Maksoud by the anti-Assad militia which took place in recent days could mark the fate of Aleppo, the metropolis battered for months by a bloody civil war. "That neighborhood" confirms to Fides Agency Father David Fernandez, a missionary of the Institute of the Incarnate Word - is located on a hill overlooking Aleppo and is a strategic point for those who want to conquer the central area of the city, where there are also government buildings. I am told that already many downtown streets have been closed and noboby can pass through these streets, because from the buildings snipers shoot at everything that moves."
In Cheikh Maksoud, Christians once represented the majority. In recent years the Kurdish population had become dominant, but many Christian families were still gathered around the Armenian Catholic and the Greek-Orthodox Church.
Father David confirms to Fides that in the past days more than three hundred Christian families have fled the area captured by the rebels. "At least 120 Christians" says the priest, "have found refuge in the house of the Marist Brothers." Among the fugitives, news about murders and rapes of women perpetrated against families who were linked to the army government circulate. "Even I have heard of this," says Father David, "but the information we receive is a lot and sometimes contradictory, and for the moment there is no way of verifying it."
Yesterday, through the social network youtube the fatwa issued by Yasir al-Ajlawni was released - A Jordanian Salafi sheikh - resident in Damascus – who declares lawful for opponents of the regime of Bashar al-Assad rape committed against "any Syrian woman not Sunni." According to the disturbing sheikh, capturing and raping Alawi or Christian women is not contrary to the precepts of Islam. (GV) (Agenzia Fides 05/04/2013).

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