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AFRICA/ZAMBIA - Pre-meditated attack against a peaceful gathering in a church

Lusaka (Agenzia Fides) - "The Oasis Forum and its constituent members are appalled and shocked by the behavior of the Patriotic Front (PF, the ruling party) cadres who attacked a peaceful gathering of several civil society organizations, on 31 May 2013, inside the Church of the Bible Gospel Outreach Church in Africa (BIGOCA) situated in Matero township in Lusaka." This was reported in a statement sent to Fides Agency. The Oasis Forum comprises all the main Christian denominations in Zambia. The statement was signed by the Catholic Church by Fr. Cleophas Lungu, Secretary General of the Episcopal Conference of Zambia.
"The consortium of civil society, exercising their rights, were gathered to pray and peacefully protest the Government's removal of subsidies on Maize meal, agriculture and fuel," says the statement that entirely rejects the responsibility of the incident on the leaders of the PF.
"That PF cadres, weilding sticks and all manner of offensive instruments descended upon innocent citizens, Church leaders, journalists, cameramen and some politicians in a Church, is unprecedented and totally shocking" said the statement that accuses the attackers of having committed a "pre-meditated and planned act of violence "
The Oasis Forum recalls of having "lamented the diminishing space for dissent in Zambia. Citizens and opposition political parties must be accorded legitimate space to register different opinions, for example, through peaceful protests."
Once again, we call upon the Zambia police to be impartial and to protect all citizens at all times. The manner in which the Zambia Police currently operates leaves much to be desired, " the statement concluded. (L.M.)
(Agenzia Fides 03/06/2013)

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