



AFRICA/LIBERIA – A town has been granted to 300 Sierra Leonean refugees; "it is the sign of the regional integration process," says a missionary

Monrovia (Agenzia Fides) - Liberia has granted citizenship to 300 Sierra Leonean refugees living in the Country since the days of the civil war that ended in 2002. The ceremony for the conferral of citizenship took place yesterday, 20 June, on the occasion of World Refugee Day.

"The granting of Liberian citizenship to 300 refugees from Sierra Leone must be seen in the continuous exchange between these two Countries," says Fr. Gerardo Caglioni, a Xaverian missionary with a long experience in Sierra Leone. "Let us remember that the wars in both States deeply influenced each other, there was a continuous flow of refugees from one Country to another. I myself remember passing by a Liberian refugee camp near the airport of Makeni (Sierra Leone) every day", says the missionary.

Fr. Caglioni also believes that yesterday's ceremony should be placed in the broader context of the agreements that existed for some time between Sierra Leone, Liberia and Republic of Guinea. "Ever since 1973 with the agreements of the Mano River Union, a kind of community among these three States was born (Guinea adhered in 1980), then extended to ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) which now have to be developed", stresses Fr. Caglioni

"The future of the whole region is in the exchange among the Countries that compose it" continued the missionary. "Not only cultural exchange but also economic. The granting of Liberian citizenship to Sierra Leoneans is the sign of the development of a process already initiated of regional integration which, if encouraged and promoted, might develop throughout the area, rich in natural resources such as fish, rutile, iron, diamonds and oil (located in offshore deposits on the border between the two Countries)", concludes Fr. Caglioni. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 21/06/2013)