



## **ASIA/SYRIA - A food embargo in Aleppo: there is "no bread"**

Aleppo (Agenzia Fides) - Supplies and goods have been blocked, including food, a real "food embargo", which is devastating the civilian population of Aleppo. The block, now in its seventh day, was imposed by rebel groups that control the northeast region of the city that now threaten even the interruption of water supply. The "rebels" are jagged in numerous groups and factions, some Islamists and jihadists such as "Jubhat al nosra", "Liwaa al tawhid", "Aasifat al Shimal", "Souqqour al shahba" and others, in which fighters from Afghanistan, Libya, Caucasus, from the former Soviet republics of Central Asia and other countries enlist. The city is split in two, a part under the control of the army (Southeast) and half under the control of armed groups (Northeast). It has been transformed into a "battlefield", with serious damage to the civilian population, of every race and religion, and sees destroyed its precious historical and cultural heritage.

Friar Bernard, one of the five Franciscan friars who has decided to remain in the city, in the convent of San Francesco, explains to Fides: "Famine is upon us. People are afraid, impoverished and cries. We focus on helping families and refugees. The Christian areas are in the middle between the area controlled by the army and the armed groups. The suffering of the civilian population is immense. The block of food is against all basic humanitarian law. People find it hard to even get bread".

The rebels took control of the road that links Aleppo to Hama. In the past few days there have been violent military clashes. Meanwhile, there is very little food supply and prices have skyrocketed. Vegetables are hard to find, because farmers are prevented from entering in the western suburbs of Aleppo. "In Aleppo, if the embargo continues, a humanitarian crisis is imminent", warns Friar Bernard.

Muhammad M., a Sunni Muslim, a professor at the University of Aleppo, told Fides: "The belligerents must explain to us the reason of so much killing of innocent people and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. Why is there a battle in the residential areas of the city? This destruction has not been seen for centuries". (PA) (Agenzia Fides 11/07/2013)