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AFRICA/CONGO DR - The UN establishes a safety zone around Goma

Kinshasa (Agenzia Fides) - The UN Mission for the stabilization of Congo (MONUSCO) has declared a security area around Goma, capital of North Kivu, in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, where for weeks there has been an on-going offensive of the Congolese army, against the guerrilla movement M23 and other armed groups operating in the province.
The purpose is to protect at least a million civilians, including refugees and inhabitants, present in the city. MONUSCO, which will have to be reinforced by the so-called rapid deployment brigade (consisting of about three thousand men and not yet operational), has been criticized by local people who do not feel adequately protected by UN troops.
The Congolese military instead are beginning to be appreciated by the population because as referred in a note sent to Fides by the Peace Network for Congo "the first victories of the army have rekindled hope in the population, tired of war and oppression of the M23 (rapes , murder, theft, forced recruitment".
"With these first successes, the Congolese army have regained the confidence of the population, accustomed to losses due to treachery and complicity. Now the people of North Kivu encourages the military, providing them with the necessary food, and even accompanying them to the front line" continues the statement. These events in Goma are an unmistakable sign of a new relationship of trust and mutual sympathy between the army and people", the statement concludes. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 02/08/2013)

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