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AFRICA/EGYPT - Copts targeted by Islamists, incited by al-Zawahiri

Minya (Agenzia Fides) - There are growing attacks and violence against Christians in Egypt when on Saturday Islamist sites and blogs began to re-launch the video message of Ayman al-Zawahiri in which the current leader of the terrorist organization al-Qaeda accused the Copts of planning together with the U.S. and the Egyptian army the "plot" to overthrow President Mohamed Morsi. In his speech, the physician-theologian Egyptian terrorist blamed the Copts of having supported Morsi's destitution with the intent to "create a Coptic State in southern Egypt". In past days, assaults on churches and houses of the Copts occurred throughout the Country. Some episodes have been reported in Assiut and Sohag. But the most serious cases relate to some villages in the area around Minya. In the village of Bani Ahmed, on Saturday evening, August 3 gangs of Islamists caused the flight of the entire population and the burning of at least 9 homes and 24 shops owned by Christians as well as trucks, buses and cars burned in the streets.
According to the version provided by Anba Makarios, Coptic Orthodox Auxiliary Bishop in Minya, the pretext for the raid was a verbal altercation between some Islamists and the Christian owner of a bar who in his bar was listening to an eulogistic army song. The intervention of the security forces occurred when the village had already been put to fire and sword. The Christians of the village, along with a few police units available, formed a garrison of defense in front of the local church, dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Meanwhile, the violence spread in the surrounding villages. In the village of Reeda, to stir up the ferocity, the Islamists spread the false rumor that Christians had tried to set fire to a mosque, causing the assault against the local Protestant church, whose facade was severely damaged.
On Monday evening, August 5, in Cairo, several Coptic Christians - some of whom are linked to the Union Maspero Youth - staged a demonstration in front of the Supreme Court to ask for judicial measures targeted for the violences against the Copts and the arrest of inspirators and perpetrators of acts of sectarian violence.
"Christians", says to Fides Agency Anba Botros Fahim Awad Hanna, Coptic-Catholic Bishop of Minya "are likely to once again become the scapegoat of the tensions in the Country. I understand that there are many people who are disappointed and hurt. Christians are patient. It is now clear that the Islamist violence will be addressed more and more against Copts. Appropriate countermeasures are necessary, for example by increasing the protection of churches by security forces". (GV) (Agenzia Fides 06/08/2013).

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