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AFRICA/EGYPT - "We are all locked in the house and food stocks are running out", says the Bishop of Luxor

Cairo (Agenzia Fides) - "I am crying for all this simple humanity, Muslims and Christians, who reside in the villages of the area that have nothing because food supplies are running out and people are afraid to leave the house. Even those who are well off cannot buy food because all the shops are closed. I would like to reach them to give them help but I cannot because I am also segregated at home", says to Fides Agency His Exc. Mgr. Youhannes Zakaria, Coptic Catholic Bishop of Luxor, who on Friday August 16 (the day of the demonstrations organized by the Muslim Brotherhood to protest the destitution of President Morsi) suffered an attempt of aggression.

"The pro Morsi protesters after being chased away from the center of Luxor, reached the Bishopric shouting "Death to Christians". Luckily the police arrived in time to save us. Now the police and army are guarding the house with two armored vehicles", says the Bishop.

"In Luxor the situation is critical although not as in Lower Egypt (Minya, Assiut) or Cairo. However, even here there were riots during which several Christian homes were burned. Ten days ago in a village near here 5 Christians and a Muslim were killed", said Mgr. Zakaria. "For security reasons, we canceled the celebration of the Assumption, which is celebrated here on August 22 and not on the 15th. Everyone is locked in their own home. I have been locked in the Bishopric for about 20 days. The security forces have advised me not to go out", adds Mgr. Zakaria.

According to the Bishop the campaign against Christians staged by supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood stems from the fact that "they think that Christians are the cause of Morsi's fall". "It is true –he adds - that Christians participated in demonstrations against Morsi, but they were 30 million Egyptians, most of whom were Muslims, who took to the streets against the deposed President. By attacking Christians they want to throw Egypt into chaos".

Mgr. Zakaria updates the figures on the destruction suffered by the various Christian denominations in recent days. "More than 80 different churches and several Christian schools have been burned. I want to point out that in Egypt the Catholic Church manages, from Alexandria to Aswan, more than 200 schools where Christians and Muslims pupils sit next to each other".

"I make my own Pope Francis' appeal to pray for peace in Egypt. Only through dialogue and mutual respect one can get out of this dramatic situation", the Bishop concluded. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 20/08/2013)

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