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AFRICA/TANZANIA - The conditions of the priest attacked with acid remain serious. "Why is the Church attacked?" asks the Bishop

Dar es Salaam (Agenzia Fides) - "The conditions of Fr. Anselmo unfortunately remain very serious, because the acid continues to penetrate beneath the surface layers of the skin", says to Fides Agency His Exc. Mgr. Augustine Shao, Bishop of Zanzibar, who regularly visits Fr. Anselmo Mwanga'mba in hospital, the Catholic priest attacked by unknown persons on September 13th with a jet of acid on the island of Zanzibar (see Fides 16/09/2013) .
"We are studying the possibility to transfer him abroad, perhaps in India, in a center that is specialized in treating these kinds of cases", said Mgr. Shao.
Fr. Anselmo is only the latest victim of a series of acid attacks that have occurred on the island in recent months. The other victims include two 18-year-old English girls who arrived in Zanzibar as volunteers and Fadhil Suleiman, Secretary of the Chief Mufti of Zanzibar.
"The issue of these violent attacks is complex", says the Bishop. "In the past year we have been recording serious violent incidents in Zanzibar. I remember for example that another priest, Fr. Ambrose Mkenda was seriously injured at Christmas last year and is still recovering, while in February Fr. Evarist Mushi was killed" (see Fides 03/01/2013 and 18/02/2013) .
"One of the causes of such violence is political tension on the new Constitution and the emergence of the request on behalf of some political forces regarding the independence in Zanzibar from the rest of the Country. There are also disagreements on the revision of the lists of voters for the 2015 elections". (after independence in 1963, the year after Zanzibar joined Tanganyika which is today's Tanzania) .
"With regards to the economic and social impact, among the island's inhabitants there prevails a feeling of being bypassed by workers from other areas of Tanzania and from foreign Countries, such as Kenya", said Mgr. Shao .
"Finally there is the Islamic extremist propaganda on behalf of foreign-trained preachers who spread hatred against Christians. Several young islanders were sent to train abroad and import these ideas in Zanzibar, while violent preaching is divulged through the local media", said the Bishop.
"In short, the causes of these violent acts are multiple. It is a complex situation but the question I cannot answer is that Christians and Catholics in particular are seen as a target.
In addition to the priests attacked, 4 churches were vandalized and destroyed, most of them Catholic", concluded Mgr. Shao. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 18/09/2013)

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