



AFRICA/CENTRAL AFRICA - "The Central African Republic is a powder keg", says the Archbishop of Bangui

Bangui (Agenzia Fides) - "The Central African Republic is a powder keg", warned Mgr. Dieudonné Nzapalainga, Archbishop of Bangui and President of the Episcopal Conference of Central Africa, on the eve of his deposition on October 21 at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. Mgr. Nzapalainga was invited to describe the dramatic humanitarian situation in which the Central African people live.

According to a statement sent to Fides Agency by Caritas Internationalis, Mgr. Nzapalainga intends to ask to expand the role of the African Union peacekeeping mission in Central Africa (MISCA) in order to ensure the best safety conditions; to initiate an international humanitarian mission; to create an independent electoral commission in order to organize credible elections; and to begin investigations on crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court.

The chaos that has generated since the fall of the old government in March, with the coming to power of the rebels Seleka, continues to have serious consequences on the population. Women and girls are in particular affected because, says Mgr. Nzapalainga, "cases of rape are incalculable. People are being killed, houses burnt and women raped by the rebels".

According to the Archbishop the actual rebels have gone from 3,500 people in March to 25,000 today, even through the forced recruitment of several children. The rebels also continue to receive constant supplies of weapons, while civilians are being organized in self-defense groups with improvised weapons .

"The Central African Republic is a powder keg ready to explode", said the Archbishop.

According to Mgr. Nzapalainga, currently the most affected area is Bossangoa, 300 km to the north, where 2,000 homes have been burned and 37,000 people have sought refuge in the local Catholic mission. The living conditions of the displaced are dramatic: diseases, lack of hygiene and food shortages causing the death of 4-5 people per day. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 21/10/2013)