



## **AFRICA/CENTRAL AFRICA - Calm returns in Bouar, Caritas in aid of the displaced**

Bangui ( Agenzia Fides) - Calm has returned in Bouar, the city in the northwest of the Central African Republic, at the center of clashes between former Seleka rebels (who formally took power at the end of March) and some spontaneous groups of self-defense called "Antibalaka (see Fides 31/10/2013). As reported to Fides Agency by Fr. Beniamino Gusmeroli, a betharramite missionary (Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram): "The situation is calm and this allows us to carry out our activities in the best possible way. As Caritas, we are continuing to assist the displaced people from villages who have sought refuge in the city. We have already made an initial survey of the people to assist".

In Bouar, however, there remains latent tension that threatens to deepen the distrust between Christians and Muslims, due to the fact that members of Seleka are Muslims while the so-called " Antibalaka, are mostly Christians. "The Christians of Bouar who had taken refuge in the cathedral during the clashes in late October have left the place of worship, but a part of them, instead of returning home, preferred to hide in the countryside", said Fr. Gusmeroli. "We are trying to help them by bringing a bit of food, but the real solution is to allow these people to find serenity in order to return to their homes".

To this end, Christian and Muslim religious leaders are coordinating their efforts. "We hold regular meetings, almost weekly, between representatives of the Diocesan Commission "Justice and Peace" and Muslim leaders, which provide moments of shared reflection and prayer, to avoid stirring up new divisions and pacify the spirits" refers the missionary.

The military of FOMAC (the force deployed in the Country by the Central African States ) are in Bouar, they have the task of protecting the civilian population. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 11/11/2013)