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AFRICA/CENTRAL AFRICA - "The arrival of French and African troops is having positive effects"

Bangui (Agenzia Fides) - "The situation in the capital is calm as well as in Bangassou. One begins to feel the presence of the 200 French soldiers and about 500 Congolese military who arrived in the Country yesterday", says Mgr. Juan Jose Aguirre Munos, Bishop of Bangassou to Fides Agency.
With the sending of French and African troops, according to Mgr. Aguirre "we can describe three different situations in which the Country lives. First the rebels Seleka seem to be on the run, at least from Bangui and the surrounding areas.
"Out of Bangui - said Mgr. Aguirre - there were clashes between the rebels Seleka, especially those of foreign origin, who run away, taking with them the fruits of their looting, and the people who bar their way, trying to reclaim their property. I was told that there were no casualties in Damara and Bouali, 40-50 km from Bangui".
"In the north, where the deposed President Bozizé is from, the situation is different", continued the Bishop. "In Bouca and Bossangoa several thousand people, mostly Christians, are still refugees in the Catholic missions. In Bouca for example, 30,000 people have found shelter in the Catholic mission, while Muslims do not leave their neighborhood. The displaced are living in fear and suffer from lack of food and medicines".
"Finally the situation in my diocese, Bangassou, Seleka rebels can be considered "good"," says Mgr. Aguirre. "In Bangassou a group of Muslims, Catholics and Protestants, are trying to promote peace and reconciliation through forgiveness. This initiative is already bringing the first fruits: on Sunday, November 24, a delegation of Muslims and Protestants attended a Mass. On my return to Bangassou we will hold an interfaith prayer meeting for peace and reconciliation"
"So the situation in Central Africa is different according to the place where you are. Sectarian tensions are strongest in the north, but I think that with the deployment of French and African troops we will be able to avoid interfaith collision.We have to, however, continue to work for reconciliation", the Bishop concluded. (L.M.)
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