



## **AFRICA/CENTRAL AFRICA - "The situation in Bangui is slowly normalizing, but there are still thousands of refugees in parishes"**

Bangui (Agenzia Fides) - "The situation in Bangui is slowly normalizing, but there are still thousands of people in parishes", says to Fides Agency Mgr. Juan Jose Aguirre Muños, Bishop of Bangassou, who has been blocked in the capital of the Central African Republic since December 5, when clashes between the Seleka rebels and "anti Balaka" militias broke out in the city causing chaos and violence. With the arrival of 1,600 French soldiers in support of the African forces already deployed, Bangui is finding a little bit of order.

"The airport has finally reopened and I hope soon to be able to return to my diocese tomorrow or maybe the day after tomorrow. Taxis are circulating and shops are reopening" says Mgr. Muños. "But there are still thousands of people in parishes, where food is scarce. During the night, safety is not guaranteed. The other night, some boys from displaced families ventured in their neighborhoods to see what the situation was like, but they were intercepted by some men of Seleka who killed them. The people, therefore, are still afraid to return home".

"The French troops -continues the Bishop - are going to all the neighborhoods to disarm members of Seleka. Many of them have already been disarmed and President Michel Djotodia has accepted that former rebels return to their barracks".

We ask Mgr. Aguirre if he has news about what is happening in his diocese. "From what I was told, in spite of the 400 deaths in Bangui, there has been no violence in Bangassou and the situation is normal to the point that schools have reopened. This is due to the fact that the men of Seleka in Bangassou remained calm and did not try to take revenge on civilians for what was happening in the capital. There is also African military who contribute to help ensure safety, without forgetting the valuable work of interreligious mediation by the committee that has allowed us to calm down the population, with meetings at the local mosque on tolerance, mutual respect".

"We hope we have peace at Christmas", concluded Bishop Aguirre. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 09/12/2013)