



## **AFRICA/CENTRAL AFRICA - "The State has collapsed, UN intervention is needed": appeal of the Archbishop of Bangui and the Imam**

Bangui (Agenzia Fides) - The new President of the Central African Republic, Ms. Catherine Samba-Panza, swears in today, January 23, in a Country ravaged by fighting between former Seleka rebels and anti-Balaka militia. Often described as a result of an inter-religious conflict that opposes Christians to Muslims, the Central African situation actually comes from the collapse of state institutions, as emphasized by the Archbishop of Bangui, Mgr. Dieudonné Nzapalainga and the Imam, Oumar Kobine Layama, President of the Central African Islamic community, who are on a visit in Paris.

The two religious leaders are engaged in a tour of the European capitals to ask for help and support for their Country. The Archbishop and the Imam who have done their best to pacify the souls during several joint visits to churches and mosques where thousands of displaced people have found shelter, report that while the situation in Bangui is relatively under control, the rest of the Country is at the mercy of Seleka and anti-Balaka .

Welcoming the election of President Samba-Panza (called an "Iron Lady" by Imam Kobine Layama) Mgr. Nzapalainga insisted on the fact that the new Head of State is faced with a daunting task because the state administration has fully collapsed. "Out of 36 ministries, only two work, defense and administration of the territory", the Archbishop told AFP. "The State has failed. The administration with men and means needs to be rebuilt, in order for the Country to be a State".

The two religious leaders are demanding that the African military mission currently deployed in the Country (MISCA) becomes part of a larger force under UN protection, in order to secure the whole Country. Currently there are 6,000 French soldiers in Central Africa. Too few to control a Country as vast as France and Luxembourg, said Mgr. Nzapalainga. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 23/01/2014)