



AFRICA/CENTRAL AFRICA - "Christians and Muslims: the same blood, the same language, the same Country"

Bangui (Agenzia Fides) - "Christians and Muslims: the same blood, the same language, the same Country"; is the slogan that can be read in the parish of Fr. Dieudonné, a young priest of the Diocese of Alindao, in the Central African Republic.

According to a note of the French section of Aid to the Church in Need, because of threats by Seleka rebels Fr. Dieudonné was forced to flee in March 2013 and found refuge in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

After a few months the Central African priest managed to return to his parish, where he assisted, on December 5th to the advancing of the anti Balaka militias in the capital Bangui. Since then, there has been retaliation and revenge against those belonging to Seleka, but also of Muslims accused of having sided with the rebellion. Fr. Dieudonné immediately intervened to try to calm things down. On December 8 he saw the shops of some Muslim traders being attacked, he called the head of the district and together they attempted to calm the frantic and protect the property of the Muslims.

For weeks, Fr. Dieudonné has constantly repeated in sermons that violence and hatred are absolutely contrary to the teachings of the Gospel.

The parish he administers has organized days of prayer and reconciliation between Christians and Muslims under the slogan: "Christians and Muslims: the same blood, the same language, the same Country".

Even among Muslims, voices rise of those who preach peace. In particular, the Imam of Bangui, Oumar Kobine Layama, who in August received death threats from the leadership of Seleka, because he reminded the rebels (largely Muslims) that "stealing, killing, raping women and terrorizing people, is completely contrary to what God requires of us in the Qur'an".

Imam Oumar Kobine Layama, Mgr. Dieudonné Nzapalainga, Archbishop of Bangui, and Pastor Nicolas Guerékoyame Gbangou, President of the Evangelical Churches, are the three religious leaders working together to reconcile the Central Africans. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 07/02/2014)