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AFRICA/CENTRAL AFRICA - "The rebels wanted to kill me", says the Bishop of Bossangoa kidnapped by the rebels, who murdered a priest in his diocese

Bangui (Agenzia Fides) - "A great misfortune, that led me to the east area of my diocese": this is how His Exc. Mgr. Nestor Désiré Nongo-Aziagbia, Bishop of Bossangoa (in the north of the Central African Republic) describes to Fides Agency how he was kidnapped by a formation of the Seleka rebels.
"On Wednesday, April 16th – Mgr. Nongo-Aziagbia told Fides – I was accompanying three priests of my diocese by car to their parish (the parish of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in Bantangafo) when around 5 pm we were intercepted by the rebels of the Seleka coalition under the command of a colonel who was in charge in Bossangoa when the rebels occupied the city".
"I was taken to this colonel - says the Bishop - who accused me for ruining his plan to regain Bossangoa, of having put defamatory statements against him on the Internet, of having gathered information in Bantangafo that I would have had to pass on to the international forces present in Central Africa, the Sangaris (French) and the MISCA (African)".
The Bishop adds that "the rebels removed the pectoral cross and episcopal ring. Then my three priests and I were brought to Sidot to be killed. At the height of Kabo (in the far north of the Country, on the border with Chad, ed.) our convoy was stopped thanks to the intervention of the international community and especially of the commander of the local military area of Seleka, a general, who did not agree with the order of execution. All this happened on Holy Thursday, on Good Friday we were brought back to Bantangafo where the commander of MISCA came to pick us up by helicopter in order to take us back home".
Always in the diocese of Bossangoa on April 18, Good Friday, Fr. Christ Forman Wilibona was shot to death. "Fr. Wilibona was one of my priest's – says to Fides Mgr. Nongo-Aziagbia - who was returning from the Chrism Mass (which for logistical reasons was celebrated on Good Friday instead of Thursday)".
"Fr. Wilibona died instantly - the Bishop continues - . The local population tried to recover the body. Finally, the local villagers were able to bury the corpse, but was later transferred with the help of the Red Cross, to the mission of Paoua where Fr. Wilibona was pastor".
"All the north of my diocese is occupied by the rebels of the coalition Seleka, which lay down the law in spite of the presence of international forces. I ask myself: why is their presence needed in Central Africa?" Concluded Bishop Nongo-Aziagbia. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 24/04/2014)

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