

The Sudanese Bishops are showing a preoccupation for the delicate situation the country is passing through and express fear the return of war despite the peace agreement which includes a referendum for self-determination for southern Sudan in 2011.

Various Catholic and Non Governmental Agencies have warned for a long time about increased violence in Sudan and the grave risk of returning to war. Mons. Cesare Mazzolari, Comboni Missionary Bishop of Rumbek, has spoken of the dramatic situation which they are living. "In many parts of the country, militias of the Government are spreading terror among the populations, increasing fear and provoking tensions between the different ethnic groups present".

Also, Comboni Missionary Mons. Max Macram, Bishop of El Obeid, has strongly criticized the Government: " For more than 20 years I've been witnessing religious persecution and slavery, of tortures and violations, of hummer and death." In a conversation with the Catholic Association Ayuda a la Iglesia Necesitada (AIN), Mons. Macram told of unimaginable suffering of the people: "More than 2 million people have been victims of a genocide directed at Christian Sudanese and other non-Muslims in general.

The Bishop of El Obeid added that the number of dead is more than those registered in Bosnia, Kosovo and Rwanda and the Government ordered the bombing of churches, schools, hospitals and refugee camps. Mons. Macram clarified that this was not taking place at the moment in South Sudan but these latest events in Darfur are a repetition of what happened in the south of the country and there is no doubt that it is genocide.

According to the Bishop, "the disgrace of the population has not abetted and the Government continues to behave like a father who ignores his children", and even manipulates and deceives. In fact, the number of non-Muslims in general and of Christians in particular is much higher than the figures that are continually given by official sources.

For Mons. Macram, they have not completed the promises of the peace accord signed in 2005. Refugees continue without the possibility of returning to their homes, reconstruction is nonexistent and there is lack of much infrastructure, while oil income does not benefit effected areas.

The Bishop of El Obeid also criticizes the representatives of the SPLA (political arm of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army), a shame that they only pursue their own personal interests and not that of the population. In addition, it signals that corruption has become a very serious problem. " When I ask politicians what they have done with the money, they don't know what to say, because they are just as corrupt as the Government", he affirmed.

In this same regard, Mons. Macram also denounced the lack of cohesion of the Sudanese opposition, as the disunion does nothing more than prolong the suffering of the people.

For his part, Mons. Rudolph Deng Majak, Bishop of Wau in the state of Bahr al Ghazal, addressed his faithful this past Christmas calling them "to enter the new year 2010 as a peaceable nation, embrace sentiments of peace to favor reconciliation." Mons. Majak invited the Sudanese politicians, "to put the country in the hands of God." According to the Bishop of Wau, "despite the diverse points of view, we are one nation that must commit to walking united."

After decades of war and terror that have caused millions of deaths, in 2005 an accord called the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed that provides for holding multi-party elections in April of this year and a referendum for self-determination of Southern Sudan in 2011.

This accord has not been able to establish real peace and in reality, has not done more than regulate a provisional ceasefire. As the date approaches for the referendum, tension also increases, until the risk of returning to war is increasingly serious.

(translated from the original Spanish written by Fr. Ismael Piñon mccj)