

March 31, 2011 - Ivory Coast – The mission in Duékoué, the last hope



(ANS – Duékoué) – Confirmation of the bloody events taking place in Ivory Coast comes from the Salesian community in Duékoué, the only Catholic mission in that city. Conflicts between the two factions in the field have now reached the level of the rounding-up and killing of adversaries.

Almost single-handedly the Salesian house is providing refuge and help, but the situation seems to be developing into a humanitarian crisis, following attacks that the Salesian missionaries have witnessed by supporters of Ouattara, who for months has been in contention with Gbagbo for the presidency of the country.

On the afternoon of March 30, the Carrefour district was completely looted. Attackers forced residents to leave their houses and all their belongings behind, then ransacked the houses and set them on fire.

Many witnesses report that the refugees were told to go to the Salesian mission. These same witnesses also speak about young men being executed on suspicion of taking part in the fighting or of belonging to the local armed militia.

The flow of refugees is extraordinary. The arrival of those from the Carrefour district together with those from other parts of the city means that the parish courtyard has quickly been totally filled. The Salesians are no longer able to offer the least covering, and during the night it rained for about 40 minutes. In addition, for three days the mission has been without electricity or running water.

To cope with this tragic situation, the Salesians and the refugees are in urgent need of help from the main humanitarian aid agencies.