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## Africa: "low-intensity wars" are deadlier than the coronavirus

Peace treaties in Africa are not always successful and hardly ever result in an end to hostilities. In many cases, so-called "low-intensity wars", such as those still being fought in Chad, Central African Republic or South Sudan (and most recently also in northern Mozambique), claim more victims than the declared wars. The first-hand accounts of missionaries who have been living in conflict zones for years are a wake-up call for the rest of the world: "death no longer makes the news here," they said. Violence further exacerbates poverty in Countries that are also facing the Colvid-19 pandemic. The portal of the Missio Foundation (<https://www.missioitalia.it/>) offers their testimonies, narrating the suffering of forgotten peoples.



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"When I arrived in Chad in the 1980s, this land yielded no fruit, it seemed as hard as cement," she recalls. "Now farmers are beginning to cultivate, but our rulers have always known that allowing the country to grow meant that they no longer can exercise control over the people. When I first arrived there were only five kilometres of paved road." Chad is more developed today, but it remains very poor. Yet there is no lack of resources: gas and oil deposits in Chad are attractive to many. France "still considers the country as its own colony." **Diamonds, amidst instability and conflict.** Even diamonds from the Central African Republic, where Sister **Elvira Tutolo** lives, contribute to instability and conflict. The latest outbreak of violence dates back to a week ago, when 14 armed groups refused to disband and lay down their weapons, despite the signing of a peace treaty. "The town of Obo was put to fire and sword, while last week armed strife broke out in the centre of another town, Ndele. Armed groups continue causing problems by violating the peace agreement (signed on February 5, 2019). It's a tragic situation: we were very much looking forward to peace," Sister Elvira told Missio.



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"It happened also in the past: schools were closed for months, if not years, people were confined to their homes for weeks, field hospitals were set up, travel or other activities were cancelled, and monthly income was reduced", said Father Trincherio. **South Sudan: the wrong approach.** South Sudan is yet another extremely unstable country despite the signing of the peace agreement with Sudan, struggling with a war that has turned into domestic guerrilla warfare. Father **Christian Carlassare**, a Combonian missionary, in South Sudan since 2005, said in an interview with Missio: "Unfortunately the Country embarked on the wrong path already in 2013: exclusionary policies led to an internal ethnic conflict. In fact, the national pacification process, despite offering a dialogue platform for many people, shows no sign of inclusiveness, offering no guarantees." **The Shepherdesses in Mozambique.** Hostilities have recently broken out in northern Mozambique, in Cabo Delgado, where jihadist militias, who also go by the name of Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jama, are undermining the tranquillity of a Country with a reputation as one of the most peaceful. "Of course, we are worried. The latest attacks occurred 150 km from the city of Pemba where we live. The insurgents are making their way towards the city and no one seems capable of tracking them down," Sister **Franca Bettin**, a nun from the Pemba Shepherdesses, told NotiCum magazine. The identity of the terrorists is not clear, reportedly they are members of al Shabab affiliate groups. "The situation is growing worse. The news of 52 dead at the beginning of the month of April was released only recently. The death toll was never as high", she said. The bishop whose Diocese of Pemba falls under the Province of Cabo Delgado has been denouncing -unheard - the situation for the past two years, exposing himself to a very uncomfortable situation. He asked the government to take specific action, he even wrote to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Mozambican Episcopal Conference in a message demanded vigilance on the developments in the Cabo Delgado region." Many displaced people are seeking shelter with relatives and friends in Pemba. "Gomes is our neighbour and friend," said the Shepherdesses. "He is hosting 20 people in his house: relatives and friends of relatives. They arrived overnight, adjusted to the best of their ability, the capacity for adaptation in Africa is incredible. These twenty people, however, must eat every day, and Gomes certainly doesn't have the possibility to provide them with food."

*\*in cooperation with Paolo Annechini and Chiara Pellicci*

