

The article was first reported by The Agenzia Fides.

Kinshasa (Agenzia Fides) - The people accused of complicity in the murder of Fr. Vincent Machozi, an Assumptionist priest killed on the night of 20 March 2016 in the village of Vitungwe-Isale, 15 km from Butembo in the Beni Territory, in the Province of North Kivu in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see Fides 21/3/2016 ) have been acquitted.

The sentence of acquittal was issued by the military court of Butembo-Beni, during a hearing that took place on 6 September. The court in particular declared the main accused, Mwami Abdul Kalemire III, traditional leader innocent, who had invited Fr. Machozi to a peace meeting that, according to the accusation, apparently proved to be a deadly trap for the priest. Mwami had been arrested in Uganda and is still awaiting extradition in the DRC (see Fides 28/8/2017).

The civil part expressed disappointment with the sentence issued by the court in the absence

of important defendants and witnesses. "We wonder how the court can fall so low to the point of issuing a judgment in the absence of the main defendant and in the absence of witnesses" protested one of the civil lawyers, Moses Kasereka Kangitsi.

Before being killed Fr. Vincent had been threatened with death, so much so that in 2003 he had been forced into exile in the United States. After his return to the DRC he had escaped seven attacks. Fr. Vincent had repeatedly denounced the suffering of the Nande population in the Territory of Beni, caused by the presence of various armed groups dedicated to the illegal exploitation of coltan (mineral used in the manufacture of electronic components for mobile phones), often with the connivance of the regular army, whose court acquitted the alleged accomplices in his murder. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides, 10/9/2018)