



AFRICA/NIGERIA - "Human life is sacred," say Christian and Islamic leaders of Nigeria, condemning violence in Jos

Abuja (Agenzia Fides) - "Human life is sacred and belongs to God alone to give and to take away. It must therefore be respected, protected and preserved by all men and women who claim to believe in God under any name," affirms a joint statement signed by Archbishop John Olorunfemi Onaiyekan of Abuja, President of the Christians Association of Nigeria (CAN), and Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III, Sultan of Sokoto and President, Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA).

In the statement, the leaders of the two most important associations, Christian and Islamic, express their strong denunciation of violence in the city of Jos, capital of the Plateau State (see Fides 20 and 21/1/2010) and invite all to work for peace and reconciliation.

The two leaders met in the Nigerian capital of Abuja, along with other religious representatives, under the auspices of the Nigerian Inter-religious Council (NIREC) which is a council of Christians and Muslims who seek to promote interreligious dialogue.

"Settling any kind of grievances through violence and bloodshed is ungodly. Rather than solve problems of misunderstanding in any society, violence and bloodshed only compounds them," the document affirms. "In the name of the religious communities that we represent, we vigorously condemn the new wave of violence that has once again erupted in and around the city of Jos in recent days."

"We commit all those who have been killed to the mercy of God. We offer our sincere condolences to all the bereaved. At the same time, we fully support and reinforce the passionate appeal of the Inter-religious Committee of Plateau State, issued in the very heat of the events, calling on all to eschew violence, seek peace and work for it."

The statement says: "NIREC observed that the primary responsibility of ensuring the security of life and property rests squarely with government and commended the efforts so far made by government at all levels to contain the crisis. It however appealed to government and the various security agencies to remain vigilant not only to prevent a spread of the crisis to other parts of the country, but to also fish out and deal with not only the material perpetrators of violence but those who recruit, arm and support them."

"If Nigeria must pull itself out of this problem of civil disturbances and violent communal clashes, security agencies must not treat perpetrators of these acts like 'untouchables' or 'sacred cows' any longer," the statement concluded. (LM) (Agenzia Fides 22/1/2010)