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AFRICA/NIGERIA - "I mourn the loss of that Muslim leader with whom I worked for peace," Archbishop of Jos tells Fides

Jos (Agenzia Fides) - "I was shocked by the death of the Emir Haruna Abdullahi of Wase, who was my friend and with whom we started a fruitful collaboration for peace between Christians and Muslims," Fides was told by Archbishop Ignatius A. Kaigama of Jos, capital of Plateau State, in north-central Nigeria, where in recent years there have been several ethnic and religious clashes.
Archbishop Kaigama has sent Fides his memories of the Emir Abdullahi, who has died from an illness.

"The Emir and I began our friendly association one afternoon when he was on his way from Kaduna and branched at my house to welcome me to Jos, upon my transfer from Jalingo Diocese in Taraba State to Jos as the new Archbishop," writes Archbishop Kaigama.
"He said he also wanted to appreciate my role in hosting displaced Muslims on our compound in the wake of the 2001 ethno/religious crisis. He intended a brief visit but we ended up spending close to two hours. We discovered that we had a mutual passion for peace and inter religious harmony."
The friendship and cooperation between the Emir Haruna Abdullahi and Archbishop Kaigama was crucial in appeasing hearts and promoting dialogue between different communities, especially after recurrent clashes that have also affected the area recently (see Fides 25/3/2010). After the crisis of Yelwa of 2004, which caused several deaths and thousands of displaced persons, a moment of prayer between Christians and Muslims was organized.
"For the first time Christians and Muslims were able to meet face to face following the sad crisis that led to the destruction of lives and properties. It was a successful mission. Since that mission, I visited the Emir several times in his Wase palace and he was a regular visitor to my house in Jos. We issued several joint messages of peace and harmony and I believe that it was in recognition of this that the Chief Joshua Dariye Government constituted the Inter Religious Council for Peace and Harmony and appointed us to head it," Archbishop Kaigama recalls.
"Our friendship and work for peace was commended and encouraged by many Muslims and Christians to the extent that many would say the Emir and the Archbishop are inseparable when it comes to peace matters. However, some few did not believe that a genuine friendship was possible between a Muslim and a Christian leader. On our part, we didn't need to provide any philosophical proof that our friendship was working well. I spent two full days in his house in Wase and he was such a gracious host, helping me to meet with the Christians of the area and made me very comfortable. He came regularly to Jos to visit me and we had long hours of chat. Throughout the crises in Plateau State we remained in constant contact sometimes on a daily basis, thanks to the mobile phone."
Archbishop Kaigama concludes by recalling his friend with these words: "Thank you for believing in me and for your trusting and loyal friendship. We prayed and agonized together on the best ways to avoid crises in Plateau State. Our struggles will not be in vain." (LM) (Agenzia Fides 6/10/2010)

> LINKS
Emir Haruna Abdullahi of Wase, A Tribute by Most Rev. Ignatius A. Kaigama (in English):
http://www.fides.org/eng/documents/Brother_and_Friend_Emir_of_Wase.doc:

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