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AFRICA/NIGERIA-Clashes in northern Nigeria: a report of "Justice and Peace" complains that "someone has armed extremists"

Abuja (Agenzia Fides) – About 300 to 500 deaths (according to police sources), 300 houses have been destroyed (as verified by the local Bishop), over 14 thousand internally displaced persons -IDPs. This is the toll of the clashes in and around Kafanchan according to a report of the Commission for "Justice and Peace" of the local diocese. The report was published by Catholic News Service of Nigeria (news agency sponsored by the Episcopal Conference of Nigeria) and reached Fides.

Kafanchan is a city, an important railway junction, of the state of Kaduna, in north-central Nigeria. According to the report by the Justice and Peace, on April 18, following the news of the reelection of President Goodluck Jonathan, in the elections of April 16, tension increased gradually in Kafanchan and in some neighboring cities, when "the supporters of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), for most Muslims, who make up a small fraction of the population of Kafanchan, launched guerrilla type attacks against innocent citizens who live in their immediate vicinity". The CPC is the party of Muhammadu Buhari, a former military dictator who candidated for the presidential election, challenging the reelection of Jonathan.

According to the testimonies gathered, the assailants were equipped with sophisticated weapons while the attacked could only defend themselves with weapons such as batons. The report denounces, "the large quantity of illegally acquired weapons from the community Hausa / Fulani, weapons that were distributed in a widespread manner within this community to be used against their guests (mostly Christians), without being guilty of a single provocative act". In recent decades, in northern Nigeria populations from southern Nigeria, largely Christian have settled. The contrasts between "indigenous" and "guests" is manipulated by local politicians for power. "Justice and Peace" complains that, in relation to the last election, "some politicians of the North had promised to make Nigeria ungovernable, throwing it into chaos and confusion if they had failed in their attempt to rule the country". (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 02/05/2011)

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