



AFRICA/NIGERIA - "We are saddened and deeply concerned about the attack against the UN headquarters", says the Archbishop of Abuja

Abuja (Agenzia Fides) - "It is a very sad event, which causes deep concern", says His Exc. Mgr. John Olorunfemi Onaiyekan to Fides, Archbishop of Abuja, Federal Capital of Nigeria, where yesterday, August 26, a serious attack hit the United Nations local headquarters. A car driven by a suicide bomber managed to enter the UN complex, in the embassy area, then exploded at the entrance. The explosion caused 18 deaths and numerous injuries.

The attack was attributed to the Boko Haram sect. "We do not know what these people intend to do and I ask myself which forces are behind these events. We also expect an appropriate response from the government to stop this violence", said the Archbishop of Abuja, who expresses solidarity with the victims of the terrorist attack. Pope Benedict XVI expressed his dismay with regards to the terrorist violence and his deep sorrow for the victims by sending two telegrammes, respectively, addressed to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon and to the President of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan. In the messages, signed by Cardinal Secretary of State Tarcisio Bertone, the Pope says he is sorry for the "terrible loss of life both among citizens and UN employees". The Pope renews his appeal "to those who choose death and violence" to "embrace instead life and dialogue". "We sincerely thank the Holy Father for having expressed His sympathy and concern at a time which is so sad for Nigeria", concluded Mgr. Onaiyekan.

The Boko Haram sect is originally from northern Nigeria, where several attacks against police and places of worship, both Muslims and Christians have been carried out. Among these is the cathedral of Maiduguri, capital of Borno State, in the north-east, severely damaged by an attack in June (see Fides 08/06/2011). On June 16 a car bomb exploded at the National Police headquarters in Abuja, causing two deaths (see Fides 17/6/2011). Again the attack was attributed to the Boko Haram sect, which seems to have allied with foreign Jahada elements. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 27/08/2011)