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AFRICA/NIGERIA - Links between the Boko Haram sect and Al Qaeda: "confirms our suspicions", says the Archbishop of Jos

Abuja (Agenzia Fides) - The Nigerian Boko Haram sect has ties with the group Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). This is what Abdelkader Messahel, Deputy Foreign Minister of Algeria said, citing the existence of intelligence reports about it. These links are confirmed by an investigation of the Nigerian newspaper The Vanguard, which recalls how Boko Haram between 2004 and 2007 had created a training camp near the town of Kanamma, in Yobe State (north-east of Nigeria), whose capital Damaturu, was recently the scene of a bloody assault on various civilian and military targets, including some churches (see Fides 05/11/2011). This field, called "Afghanistan", was dismantled by local security forces in 2007. The members of Boko Haram created another one close to Maiduguri, in the nearby Borno State, which has long been the center of a series of uninterrupted attacks.
The Nigerian newspaper article also states that, according to security sources, at least 8 members of the Nigerian sect were sent to Algeria, in a local extremists field linked to Al Qaeda, to learn how to build improvised explosive devices (IEDs), in other words bombs, which in spite of the name can be very powerful and sophisticated. Given the recent attacks perpetrated by the use of these devices, it is clear that these people returned to Nigeria with their technical knowledge
"I have not read the article you mentioned, but if this information is correct it confirms what we have been suspecting for some time, namely that there must be a foreign hand in the Boko Haram operations - says to Fides Archbishop Ignatius Ayau Kaigama, Archbishop of Jos -. We believe that this group until recently did not have the technical knowledge to build bombs and handle sophisticated weapons".
If Boko Haram and AQMI connect we risk creating an arc of crisis stretching from North Africa to West Africa, a risk heightened by the large number of weapons circulating in the region from the arsenals of the army of the former Libyan dictator Gaddafi. In December we will hold a summit on terrorism in Mauritania, bringing together the Countries of the Sahel and those adjacent to it, including Nigeria. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 15/11/2011)

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