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AFRICA/NIGERIA - "Do not be afraid: another Nigeria is possible", says the Bishop of Sokoto

Abuja (Agenzia Fides) - "Do not be afraid". This is the sense of Archbishop Matthew Hassah Kukah's pastoral Letter, Bishop of Sokoto, the capital of the homonymous State in the north-west of Nigeria, of which a copy was sent to Fides. On 10 December 2011, during a radio broadcast, Mgr. Kukah made an appeal to Nigerians so that they do not feel frightened by recent events (in particular the attacks carried out by the Boko Haram sect). "Since then, things have got worse" recognizes Bishop Kukah. "On Christmas day, a bomb exploded in Santa Teresa, Catholic Church, in Madalla, state of Niger, killing more than thirty people and wounding a large number of other innocent citizens. Just two days later, in Ebonyi State more than sixty people were killed and properties worth millions of naira were destroyed, hundreds of families displaced. In the midst of all this, on New Year's Day, the President announced the withdrawal of subsidies for fuel and threw a nation already angry and frustrated in violent demonstrations", writes the Bishop of Sokoto.
Mgr. Kukah proposes, to get out of this situation, three modalities. First, the prayer for the nation, in particular to defeat corruption. The second is solidarity among all believers, Christians and Muslims. "Corruption has destroyed the fabric of our society. The State's inability to punish the criminals as criminals have created the illusion that there is a conflict between Christians and Muslims. In fact, this is an excuse to ensure that our attention is diverted from the true source of our evils: corruption. As Nigerians, Christians and Muslims, we must be together to ensure that our resources are properly used for the common good", writes the Bishop.
Finally, religious leaders must unite in condemning violence and corruption, said Mgr. Kukah, denouncing the widespread of phone messages (SMS) that "appeal to our worst demons". "It has been reported that several religious leaders believed or encouraged the circulation of such false and provocative messages".
"Another Nigeria is possible", concludes Mgr.Kukah, referring to the popular mobilization against the rising price of fuel which has forced the government to partially step back (see Fides 16/01/2012). (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 17/01/2012)

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