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AFRICA/MALI - Japan closes its embassy in Bamako, but there are no specific threats against foreigners

Bamako (Agenzia Fides) - "The closure of the Embassy of Japan in Bamako is a preventive measure, taking account of the terrorist attack in Algeria during which several Japanese citizens lost their lives, but to our knowledge there are no specific threats against foreign nationals in the capital," says to Fides Agency Don Edmond Dembele, Secretary General of the Episcopal Conference of Mali, commenting on the decision announced today by the government of Tokyo to close its embassy in Bamako.
Meanwhile French military operations continue against jihadi groups that occupy the north of Mali. Yesterday the aviation of Paris hit some guerrilla sites in Tombouctou.
The international press states that violence against citizens of touareg origin were committed in the cities recaptured by the Malian army. "In the local media, I have not seen such news reported. The Chief of Staff of the Malian armed forces, however, has stated that if this information were verified, promised that those responsible will be punished," said Don Dembele. "The authorities in each case are launching appeals for the military and civilian to avoid confusing the people in the north (such as the Tuareg) with members of the guerrilla groups."
After the capture of the cities of the north in March 2012 by jihadists, in the south of Mali various militias made up of civilians have been created. "These militias, two in particular, recruited young people and have trained them for war, but from the information I have it seems that they are not engaged in combat these days," explains Don Dembele. "On the other hand, the authorities have authorized to act in an open and official manner" said the priest. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 23/01/2013)

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