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AFRICA/NIGERIA - The Bishops: "Nigeria now almost totters on the brink. Prayer is essential to restore peace"

Abuja (Agenzia Fides) – The Bishops of the Catholic Church in Nigeria have warned against the granting of blanket amnesty to members of the Boko Haram terrorist group describing such an act as an "endorsement of criminality". They however support the granting of amnesty premised on equity and justice. The position of the bishops was made known by the President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, Most Rev. Ignatius Ayau Kaigama, Archbishop of Jos during a press conference. The statement titled "To rescue Nigeria from collapse" highlights that "genuine amnesty should mean offering pardon to the repentant militants and nor appeasing criminals and their sponsors to stay calm."

The Bishops, on the one hand hope that the state of emergency declared in the three states of north-eastern Nigeria can "achieve the desired objectives," the Bishops also urged the government to continue "to explore the most effective means of dialogue with a view to restoring our country to normalcy."

Tracing the genesis of the Boko Haram crisis in the country, the Bishops noted: "what started as a mere clash between law enforcement agencies and members of the Islamic sect Boko Haram has since spiraled into what can be best described as a low intensity war especially in some northern states of the country." They alerted: Taken together with a range of other crisi in other parts of the country such as armed robbery, kidnapping, communal clashes, Nigeria now almost totters on the brink."

"Sadly, the entire apparatus of state security seems totally overwhelmed by the agents of darkness," remarked the statement.

Suggesting the way out, the Bishops, amongst other things, stressed the importance of prayer, "indispensable means for restoring the country to normalcy." (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 22/05/2013)

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