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AFRICA/NIGER - The assault on the prison of Niamey reveals the links between Boko Haram and groups of Mali

Niamey (Agenzia Fides) - The assault on the prison of Niamey (see Fides 03/06/2013) was carried out by a commando of the Nigerian Islamist Boko Haram sect. This was stated by the Minister of Justice of Niger who noted that among the 22 prisoners who escaped there is also a member of Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), one of the three jihadist groups attacked by French troops of the Serval operation in northern Mali .
"Between MUJAO and Boko Haram there are now proven conspiracies," says to Fides Agency Fr. Mauro Armanino, an SMA (Society of African Missions) missionary, referring to another active jihadist group in northern Mali, the Unity Movement for Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO).
We therefore ask the missionary if in his opinion Niger now risks becoming a link between jihadist groups operating in Sahel-Saharan Africa (Mali, southern Algeria and Libya, north Niger) and the Nigerian movement Boko Haram. "It is a dangerous reality also because part of the Houssa population is situated in Niger and another in Nigeria. Certainly Boko Haram are also present on this side of the border " responds Fr. Mauro.
"For some time I had been writing in some articles that the problem was not to know if something will happen in Niamey, but when – stresses the missionary - this is because the government of Niger, which is a 98% Muslim Country, made a choice of sending troops to fight in Mali and accepted the French military and the U.S. drones on its territory. I understand that these choices are complicated."
"People are worried. One is still trying to reconstruct the dynamics of the assault on the prison but there are controversies. In fact, a local newspaper headlines that the "escape reveals the shortcomings of the system," concludes Fr. Mauro. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 04/06/2013)

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