



AFRICA/NIGERIA - Four churches burned by Boko Haram; Mgr. Kaigama: "regional approach to defeat them"

Abuja (Agenzia Fides) - Four churches were burned in an attack probably committed by members of the jihadist group Boko Haram in Borno State, one of the three northern states of Nigeria where a state of emergency has been imposed (see Fides 21/5/2013). A group of armed men with improvised explosive devices and petrol bombs attacked the Hwa'a, Kunde, Gathahure and Gjigga communities on Gwoza Hills, burning the 4 churches, raiding and looting cattle and grain reserves belonging to the population.

"Unfortunately I do not have precise information and do not know what communities the Christian churches destroyed belong to," says to Fides Agency His Exc. Mgr. Ignatius Ayau Kaigama Archbishop of Jos and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria. "All communications have been cut off with the areas affected by military operations and it is impossible to get in touch with the Bishop of Maiduguri," explains Mgr. Kaigama.

Despite this incident, the Archbishop said that "the operation of the Nigerian army and the imposition of the State of emergency has made the population feel better and safer."

Before the recent attacks in Niger (see Fides 04/06/2013), it is certain that Boko Haram is coordinating with jihadist groups expelled from Mali. "Boko Haram is a regional issue and should be resolved with a regional approach," said Mgr. Kaigama. "We are paying the price of terrible negligence on behalf of our intelligence and our police forces who did not deal with the phenomenon in time. Now we need to bring together the resources of Nigeria, Niger and Mali to address the threat of jihadist groups. I think, however, that eventually they will be defeated," concluded Bishop Kaigama. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 17/06/2013)