



AFRICA/NIGERIA - An anti Boko Haram civilian militia worries residents of Maiduguri

Abuja (Agenzia Fides) - The local population is concerned about the presence of a civilian militia that operates alongside military personnel engaged in security operations in Maiduguri, capital of Borno State, one of three states in the north-east of Nigeria in which the federal government has imposed a state of emergency to counter the jihadist Boko Haram sect (see Fides 15/05/2013).

The military operations are carried out by the Joint Task Force (JTF), a special unit made up of the best elements of the Nigerian military. The civilian militia that supports it has been nicknamed "civilian JTF" and is made up of young people who operate checkpoints along the main streets of Maiduguri.

These operations are seen by local people as a potential threat to the fragile peace that seems to have come back after last week's violence, which caused 30 victims, a series of coordinated attacks committed by Boko Haram in response to the arrest of some of its members on behalf of the civilian militia.

According to testimonies gathered by the Nigerian Tribune newspaper, residents of Maiduguri complain that the civil task force launched a "witch hunt" against people suspected of being linked to Boko Haram, implying the possibility of "do-it-yourself" abuse and justice.

The presence of a civilian militia is therefore likely to increase tension in an area where due to the military operations and reprisals of Boko Haram, about 3 thousand people have been forced to seek refuge in neighboring Countries, Niger and Cameroon. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 24/06/2013)