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AFRICA/NIGERIA - Boko Haram: Christian girls kidnapped and Islamized, schools targeted

Maiduguri (Agenzia Fides) - The Christian community in northern Nigeria is alarmed by a phenomenon that is spreading: Christian girls under 18 are abducted and forced to convert to Islam. The girls are kidnapped and kept in the homes of emirs or radical religious leaders, sometimes linked to the "Boko haram" group. This is the complaint sent to Fides by the "Northern Christian Association of Nigeria" (CAN), concerned about the rapid growth of the phenomenon. The Association reports that it is following five cases, on behalf of the families of the kidnapped girls. But "when we report a case to the police, the officers respond that they can not do anything. Sometimes we believe they are complicit", explains Daniel Babayi, secretary of CAN.
Christians in northern Nigeria are victims of the militant Islamist group "Boko Haram" which aims to establish an Islamic state. In a terrorist campaign that has been lasting for months, many churches have been attacked and Christians killed. According to some public statements, Boko Haram said that "kidnapping Christian women is part of the new efforts to attack Christians and force them to leave the North".
One of the primary goals of the group are schools. At the beginning of July, more than 40 people, mostly students, were killed in an attack against a college in the state of Yobe. In another recent attack, the dormitory of an institute was set on fire while the children were sleeping and those who tried to escape the fire were gunned down. Boko Haram means "Western education is a sin", and its leader, Abubakar Shekau has publicly asked to multiply attacks against schools "that teach Western education". In response to the war launched by Boko Haram against the nation, for two months in the Nigerian states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa, where militants are the strongest threat, there is in effect a state of emergency. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 23/07/2013)

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