



AFRICA/SUDAN - "Converted being tracked down"

Khartoum (Agenzia Fides) - To convert from Christianity to Islam has become much more dangerous in Sudan after the secession of South Sudan, which took place in July 2011, say to Fides some believers in local communities. Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir has repeatedly stated his intention to strengthen the "sharia", making the country 100% Islamic. In accordance with the Islamic law, apostasy (rejection of Islam for another religion, ed) is punishable by the death penalty in Sudan, although no one has been executed for the "crime" in the past 20 years. About 170 people were instead imprisoned or indicted for apostasy between 2011 and 2012. According to what was reported by some NGOs working in loco, a Christian who fled from the Nuba Mountains to Sudan revealed how the authorities are trying to track down the converts from Islam. He himself was arrested in Khartoum on 23 February and long questioned by officials of the National Intelligence Security Service. His computer, iPad, cell phone, passport and other documents were seized. The agents accused him of being a spy for the rebels stationed in the Nuba Mountains, against which Sudan has been waging a campaign for two years. The man was asked to reveal the name of other Muslims who have changed their religion, converting to Christianity. According to a note sent to Fides by the group "Barnabas Team", committed to the defense of Christians and religious freedom in the world, "the persecution of Christians in Sudan, today 98% Muslim, has increased sharply after the secession of South Sudan . Churches are demolished, Christian institutions and schools closed, Christians arrested, foreign Christian workers expelled and Christian publications seized". In April, the government announced that it will not grant planning permission for new church buildings. In late June, the police entered the offices of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Sudan, to carry out administrative checks, with the aim of taking away the property. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 26/07/2013)