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AFRICA/NIGERIA - Cardinal Onaiyekan's prudence on the news of Christian women abducted by Boko Haram and forcibly converted to Islam

Abuja (Agenzia Fides) - I have heard of these cases, but it is difficult to evaluate them because there are so many "rumours" ", says to Fides Agency Cardinal John Olorunfemi Onaiyekan Archbishop of Abuja, with regards to the allegations of Christian women abducted by the Islamic Boko Haram sect and forced to marry men belonging to the movement after being forcibly converted to Islam.
"I am not aware of specific and proven cases. Even the Nigerian press has dedicated little space to news of this nature, obviously because it has found, so far, no solid evidence", said the Cardinal.
"That there are kidnappings is a fact, but I am not aware that there is a systematic campaign to kidnap Christian women in order to convert them to force them to marry Boko Haram members. This does not mean that there are rapes of war. These things happen unfortunately in conflict zones", continued Cardinal Onaiyekan who adds: " I am sorry to say but there are people who spread rumors which are not controlled in order to accentuate the sense of persecution of Christians living in areas most at risk in Nigeria. I do not think this helps us. It is always better to tell the truth".
According to the Cardinal, Boko Haram "has suffered serious blows" inflicted by the Nigerian army which in May launched a major offensive in three States in the north of the Federation. "Boko Haram is not what it was only 7 months ago. This does not mean that it has been destroyed, but now we are faced with a set of bandit gangs dedicated to robbery rather than a guerrilla-structured organization", concluded the Cardinal. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 25/11/2013)

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