



AFRICA/NIGERIA - "We are deeply worried" about the recent massacre, say the Bishops of Nigeria

Abuja (Agenzia Fides) - "The senseless massacre of innocent students in their schools in the north-eastern States of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, is deeply distressing" say the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria in a statement sent to Fides Agency at the end of their first 2014 Plenary Assembly, largely dedicated to the issues of education. The Bishops point out that "the problem of insecurity affects education". The Islamist Boko Haram sect has in fact repeatedly committing attacks against schools and school dormitories, killing students and teachers. The last assault against a school dates back to February 25 (see Fides 27/02/2014).

"Despite the efforts of security agencies, the life and property in Nigeria are still at the mercy of people with evil intentions" underline the Bishops asking the authorities to look into the also "growing conflict between cattle farmers and indigenous communities in all States of the North and the middle Belt (the central area that divides north from south) in order to find lasting solutions for peace and reconciliation". On March 14, more than 100 people were killed in a series of raids carried out by Fulani herdsmen against some villages of farmers in the State of Kaduna. The fact that the Fulani are mostly Muslim and farmers are Christians, often characterize these dramatic episodes as religious conflict, but as the Bishops have repeatedly stressed (see for example Fides 9/7/2012), these facts derive from the fight between farmers and cattle farmers.

The Bishops' Conference also calls on the authorities to respect, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the right of parents to choose which education to give their children. The Bishops in particular ask for the non-discrimination of private schools and propose the establishment of a public-private partnership in order to assure all Nigerians a quality education system. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 17/03/2014)