



AFRICA/NIGERIA - "Boko Haram threatens the unity of the army", says Cardinal Onaiyekan to Fides

Abuja (Agenzia Fides) - "The problem of Boko Haram threatens to undermine the unity of the Nigerian armed forces, especially if one gets to the point of interpreting what is happening in northern Nigeria as a religious clash between Christians and Muslims", says Cardinal John Olorunfemi Onaiyekan, Archbishop of Abuja to Fides Agency.

The local press reports that a dozen senior officers and several enlisted men were convicted by a martial court for having supplied arms and ammunition to Boko Haram. "Some newspapers have published the news citing military sources, but the high command of the Armed Forces has denied the news" says Cardinal Onaiyekan. "I am sure that with time we will know the truth. It is clear, however, that there are Boko Haram sympathizers within the army. It is difficult, however, to quantify how many there are".

"My fear - the Cardinal continues - is that the campaign against Boko Haram is seen as an attack against Islam. Now this is what Boko Haram simply wants. Unfortunately, even among Christians there are those who tend to present the fight against Boko Haram as a clash between Christians and Muslims. It is a very dangerous vision, which could undermine the unity of the police. In the army you have Christians and Muslims who have hitherto acted together, as soldiers of our armed forces".

In the meantime, attacks of the Islamist sect in northern Nigeria continue and, in particular, in the State of Borno, where at least a hundred people have been killed in attacks against four villages.

"The abduction of girls has attracted international attention. The fact that more than 200 girls are still held captive in nearly 50 days after their abduction means that a portion of the territory of Nigeria is beyond the control of the government" says the Cardinal. "We need national dialogue to decide what Country we want. The military actions alone are not enough. We must tackle the concrete problems of Nigeria, including some of the claims of Boko Haram, such as those related to the fight against corruption", concludes Cardinal Onaiyekan. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 06/06/2014)