



AFRICA/NIGERIA - "Yes to amnesty for Boko Haram, as long as there is sincere repentance and compensation for the victims" says Cardinal Onaiyekan

Abuja (Agenzia Fides) - "Although the duty of government to ensure justice and enforce good order normally entails punishing criminals, this may at times not exclude offering pardon and amnesty", said Cardinal John Olorunfemi Onaiyekan, Archbishop of Abuja, in a message addressed to Nigerians, also sent to Fides Agency. The Cardinal recalled that President Goodluck Jonathan recently made a proposal to grant amnesty to members of Boko Haram who decide to lay down their arms. A choice that is likely to create discontent in the Country, especially now that the actions of the Islamist sect continue to claim victims, while there is no certain information regarding the 200 schoolgirls abducted in April in northern Nigeria. Other 20 girls were kidnapped on June 7 in a resort in the north-east.

Cardinal Onaiyekan believes that at times offering pardon and amnesty is "a calculated risk for the higher purpose of peace and reconciliation in the community".

This does not mean, says the Cardinal, that efforts must not be made to bring back the kidnapped girls. "It should be clear to all that this is not a case of enthroneing impunity which could become a precedent to blackmail government in future through violence", emphasizes the message. "The motivation has to be the pursuit of peace and reconciliation with people who admit wrong-doing and are ready to repent. It is therefore not enough to lay down arms, perhaps because of superior fire power of government forces. There must also be a sincere change of heart" The Cardinal finally stresses that Amnesty for terrorists must go hand in hand with compensation for victims. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 10/06/2014)