



Protest of RECOWA Bishops Against the incessant kidnapping and assassination of priests and religious in the West African region

Rising from a two-day Presidential Council of Reunion of Episcopal Conferences of West Africa (RECOWA), held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 12-13 February, 2025, the Catholic Bishops decided to draw the attention of the African leaders and the entire world to an evil that is gradually gaining ground in West African region. In the past five years, many priests and religious have been either kidnapped for ransom or kidnapped and killed. This is particularly the case in countries like Burkina Faso, Mali and especially Nigeria where almost every month the news of the kidnapping of a priest or religious is received and a call for prayer made by the bishops for their release.

We, the Bishops of West Africa condemn, in the strongest terms this abnormality. Priests and religious are dedicated to the service of God and humanity. Like every other human person, their life is sacred. Their life and merger resources are devoted to helping the poor and the marginalized of our society, to education of our children, and to the propagation of the Good news of Jesus Christ. They aim to make the world more human and godlier. Kidnapping them for ransom or assassinating them is tantamount to harming the society that depend a lot on their services and sacrifices. This is not acceptable!

While calling on all Christians and people of God will in the region to raise their voice in supplication to God for a West Africa that is pacified and safe, we call on those responsible for the protection of life and properties in the region, notably the Heads of States and the Heads of the Security Corps of the States to rise up to the challenge. Without their conscious, concrete and effective commitment to securing the region, things would only get worse.

We encourage all priests and religious to remain steadfast in responding to the demands of their holy vocation in serving the poor and the marginalized and in bringing the light of Christ to the dark areas of our West African region, without giving way to fear. We urge them to remember that Christ, whose servants they are, promised never to abandon them in their mission: "I will be with you always, till the end of time" (Matthew 28:20).

Most Rev. Alexis Touabli YOLOU

President of RECOWA