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Boko Haram overruns town, kills 100

WWM (14.08.2014) - Suspected members of the radical Islamic group Boko Haram have taken over Gwoza, a major town in Nigeria's north-eastern State of Borno on August 5.

Details of the attack are sketchy; several bridges linking the town to Borno's capital, Maiduguri, and to other neighbouring areas were blown up in previous attacks, and telephones lines have been cut.

Peter Biye, a Member of Parliament representing Damboa, Chibok and Gwoza, told World Watch Monitor that at least 100 people were killed. The attackers, he said, "came in mass" dressed in army uniforms and loaded on about 15 vans, motorbikes and other vehicles, around 5 p.m.

"They chased away everybody, firing indiscriminately and killing dozens," Biye said. "Unfortunately, we lost a prominent church leader, Pastor Musa Ayuba, from COCIN Church."

The COCIN, or Church of Christ in Nations headquartered in the nation's capital city, confirmed Ayuba's death. He was in charge of a church in Guduf, a small community east of Gwoza Town. He was killed while trying to run away from the assault.

The assailants burned down a yet-uncounted number of churches, shops, houses and government buildings. Hundreds of residents escaped to the surrounding mountains. The whereabouts of the town's traditional ruler, the newly installed Emir of Gwoza, Mohammed Timta, are still unknown. His father and predecessor, Shehu Mustapha Idris Timta, was killed May 30 by Boko Haram assailants.

Biye said army troops stationed in Gwoza provided little resistance to the militants, who brought sophisticated weapons, including an armoured vehicle.

"The army used to come monthly to their headquarters in Gwoza and go back to Maiduguri," Biye said. "Unfortunately, on Monday they left behind about 150 soldiers there, but those soldiers were outnumbered by the insurgents. The army has to run away because of the sophistication of militants' weapons."

The insurgents have raised their black and white flags over Gwoza's buildings.

On July 21, Boko Haram overran Damboa, another major town in this densely populated region, killing hundreds and displacing more than 15,000 people, according the Nigeria Emergency Management Agency. The army has since driven Boko Haram out of Damboa.

Fear and uncertainty

Biye said such victories for the Army are the exception.

"Actually, in our region, the army is losing the ground," he said. "Residents are very disappointed and have lost hope. The situation is so bad that is you see them (insurgents) coming, and the army are running, and the villagers are running either. Then who is going to protect us?"

Boko Haram, based in the north-eastern state of Borno, has intensified its deadly campaign in recent days, targeting several Christian places of worship.

[On July 30, at least five churches were razed](#) as militants stormed Kwajaffa, Tashan Alade and other communities in the predominantly Christian Hawul Local Government Area of southern Borno State. The attack, carried out with improvised explosive devices and petrol bombs, was the second on the Hawul area in less than a week.

Kano, the commercial nerve center of northern Nigeria, has sustained four suicide bomb attacks in less than a week. First, on July 27, female suicide bomber [blew herself up in St. Charles Catholic Church](#), just after Mass in Sabon Gari, a Christian enclave of Kano. The area has been targeted on several occasions by Boko Haram in recent months.

The following day, two female suicide bombers blew themselves up at a trade show and a petrol station, killing one person and injuring at least six others. On July 30, an 18-year-old woman detonated a device at the Islamic Legal Studies College in Kano State Polytechnic, killing 16 students as they checked a noticeboard. The same day, another attack was averted as police arrested two suspected Boko Haram members travelling with a 10-year-old girl who was wearing a suicide explosives belt, in Funtua Town, in the relatively peaceful neighbouring State of Katsina.

[Analysts have noted](#) Boko Haram's new tactic of using female bombers.

Meanwhile, sectarian violence continues in Nigeria's "Middle Belt," where the predominantly Muslim north borders the mostly Christian south. At least one person was killed and several others were injured when gunmen, referred to as Fulani Herdsmen, invaded a Catholic Church in Ungwar Poppo, a village in the southern Kaduna State on Aug. 3. The attack marked the third outbreak of religious violence in Kachia this year.

Attacks carried out by Fulani herdsmen in central Nigeria States of Kaduna and Plateau [have reached an unprecedented level this year](#). The violence has spread also other states such Taraba and Bauchi in the east. Some analysts point to the use of guerrilla warfare tactics, aimed at wiping out an entire community. Women and children have been among the victims, and in some cases prominent families, such as community or religious leaders, were targeted.

Boko Haram destroys churches in Borno State, bombs Mosques in Yobe state

CSW (01.08.2014) - The Islamist terror group Boko Haram has destroyed churches in southern Borno State a day after suicide attacks on mosques in Yobe State claimed at least 13 lives.

According to local sources, Boko Haram gunmen stormed Kwajaffa, Tashan Alade and other communities in the predominantly Christian Hawul Local Government Area (LGA) of southern Borno State on the evening of 30 July, attacking at least five churches with improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and petrol bombs and razing them to the ground. No lives are reported to have been lost in the attack, which was the second on Hawul LGA in less than a week. On the evening of 26 July, sect members murdered two people in the Shaffa District of Hawul LGA who had fled to the area following a series of attacks on Damboa LGA between 25 June and 18 July that claimed the lives of the Commanding Officer of 195 Battalion a Divisional Police Officer (DPO), 5 policemen 16 soldiers, and many civilians. According to eyewitnesses, the gunmen beheaded both victims, placing their severed heads on their chests before leaving.

On 29 July, at least 13 people died and several were injured in two separate suicide bombings in neighbouring Yobe State. The first occurred at a centre belonging to the Izala sect and was detonated just as prayer was commencing. The second bomber targeted a mosque attached to the family home of Potiskum's Chief Imam. A day earlier, Boko Haram gunmen had stormed Katarko Town in Yobe State, killing at least eight people and abducting Muslim cleric Sheriff Ali, his wife and two other people.

Suicide bombings appear to be re-emerging as a favoured tactic, including the sinister and new component of attacks by young female bombers. Kano State has witnessed four such attacks in less than a week, the last occurring on 30 July, when a girl aged around 18 detonated a device at the Islamic Legal Studies College in Kano State Polytechnic, killing 16 students as they checked a noticeboard. Also on 30 July, police in Funtua Town, Katsina State, police arrested two suspected Boko Haram members travelling with a 10 year old girl who was wearing a suicide explosives belt.

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), said: "We extend our heartfelt condolences to those who have lost loved ones in these appalling attacks. Boko Haram continues to commit war crimes by wilfully destroying churches and pursuing a relentless campaign of religious cleansing against Christian communities in southern Borno. Moreover, the sect has illustrated once again its disregard for every religion and for the sanctity of human life, not only by targeting the innocent as they pray, but also by indoctrinating vulnerable girls for use as disposable commodities to fulfil its murderous purposes. Nigerians must put aside all religious, political and other divisions and unite in the national interest to overcome this destructive terrorist sect as a matter of urgency."

Nigeria opens long-awaited battle of ideas against Boko Haram

Reuters (30.07.2014) - <http://wwrn.org/articles/43108/> - In classrooms facing a sandy courtyard in the northern Nigerian city of Kaduna, Maska Road Islamic School teaches a creed that condemns the violent ideology of groups like Boko Haram.

Not everyone has got its message. Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, known as the "Pants Bomber", spent his youth in this school - and ended up trying unsuccessfully to blow up a U.S. airliner on Christmas Day 2009 with explosives hidden in his underwear.

But the school is steadfast in preaching tolerance to its pupils, and the government is about to adopt this message in a new strategy for containing Boko Haram, which has killed thousands in a five-year campaign for an Islamic state.

"We teach them that what they (Boko Haram) are doing is a total misunderstanding of the Islamic religion, that Prophet Mohammed was compassionate, he even lived together the non-Muslims in Medina," said headmaster Sulaiman Saiki.

Abdulmutallab was radicalised in an al Qaeda camp in Yemen, but his case shows that even youths given a relatively liberal Muslim education can be seduced by radical Islam. This is something the new government programme is aiming to combat.

Koranic schools like Maska Road will be a pillar of the strategy being launched in September to counter Boko Haram's ideology. The aim is to win over the "hearts and minds" of young Nigerians.

They will also challenge Boko Haram's claim that secular teaching is "un-Islamic" - Boko Haram means "Western education is sinful" in Hausa, the dominant language in Nigeria's mainly Muslim north.

Maska Road teaches only Koranic verses and other tenets of Muslim faith, and encourages its 300 students to take classes such as science and literature outside its walls.

"We want them to get a Western education and combine it with ... religious learning," Saiki says. Classes are held between 4 and 6 p.m., after secular schools shut.

Fatah Abdul, who studies at Maska Road, scoffs at the idea of violence in the name of Islam.

"Our religion doesn't entertain killing. Boko Haram is absolutely different from what our religion advocates," she said. "And it's not true what they say that we need an Islamic state. The leadership doesn't have to be Islamic".

Deceived

Saiki was a neighbour of Abdulmutallab when the future Pants Bomber was at school. He says Abdulmutallab didn't learn to hate the West there but "was deceived afterwards".

Abdulmutallab, a loner from a well-to-do northern family, showed how easily youths can be radicalised. Add poverty into the mix, as in Nigeria's troubled northeastern Borno state, and it's not hard to see how Boko Haram finds young recruits.

Boko Haram is suspected of being behind suicide bombings that killed 82 people in Kaduna last week, including one against a Muslim cleric about to lead a public prayer.

Kaduna, the capital of the north in colonial times, is richer than anywhere in the northeastern region where Boko Haram is based. But it shares many of its problems such as high youth unemployment, attested by the many children begging and hawking phone credit on its rubbish-filled streets.

President Goodluck Jonathan's administration has been pilloried for its apparent powerlessness to crush the rebels or protect civilians, including more than 200 schoolgirls kidnapped in April and who remain in captivity. But he has also faced censure for neglecting the insurgency's underlying causes.

So when Jonathan's National Security Adviser (NSA) Sambo Dasuki announced a new "soft approach to terrorism" in March, many instantly dismissed it as lacking in substance.

But officials in the office of the NSA say imams in mosques and traditional elders will be co-opted to preach tolerance, while measures will be taken to ensure Koranic schools teach "correct" interpretations of sacred texts.

The drive will also include educational programmes, especially increased sports and music in northern schools, plus reform programmes for convicted Boko Haram detainees.

"A lot of them don't have much Islamic knowledge, so they tend to believe what the mullahs say," Fatima Akilu, director of behavioural analysis in the office of the NSA told Reuters. "We want to teach what the Koran actually says in a language they understand."

A parallel economic programme, also funded by the NSA's budget, will address the chronic poverty seen as a major driver of the insurgency.

It may be too late to bring back hundreds of youths already fighting for Boko Haram, but the idea is to prevent more from joining.

Northern Nigeria has much lower levels of education than the south, a legacy of British colonialism, which protected the caliphates of the north from the activity of Christian missionaries who set up many schools in the south.

"The aspects of education Boko Haram don't like are the ones that allow you to think," Akilu said. "Keep people in the dark and you can control them with a singular narrative."

Undoing this partly involves showing how "Western" ideas, such as mathematics and some physics and astronomy, are rooted in mediaeval Islamic thought, which was making strides while Christians in Europe were busy burning witches.

Un-Islamic

At the Sultan Bello mosque in Kaduna's busy downtown market area, local imam Ahmed Gumi takes an unusual step to illustrate his openness to the non-Islamic world: he invites four Reuters journalists in to see, film and photograph his sermon.

Three are non-Muslim, including two Westerners. He introduces the team to his congregation of about 350 packed into a main hall, and after a chorus of "welcome" he offers a live interview about his views on Boko Haram in front of the faithful.

"It's not right to call what those boys are doing Islamic," he later told Reuters privately. "They hide behind Islam."

Gumi, one of northern Nigeria's most popular clerics, sees the idea of an Islamic state dear to extremists as a throwback.

"They want to bring back the golden age of Islamic triumph in this modern time." he says. "For a state to survive you need a strong civilisation, education, money, lawyers, doctors. You don't create a civilisation with AK-47s in the bush."

He knows his outspoken views carry a risk he'll be targeted by Boko Haram. His mosque, a towering structure spread between four sand-coloured turrets with turquoise-green domes, is guarded by scores of unarmed volunteers checking cars and bags. Boko Haram fighters have killed dozens of clerics. One of the targets of the Kaduna bombs was a Sheikh Dahiru Bauchi, an imam whose mystical Sufism is a far cry from the austere al Qaeda-style type of Islam. Bauchi survived.

Though a government critic, Gumi approves of the soft approach, "but it needs local Borno (leaders) more than people like us who are already openly opposed to them".

Root Causes

Taking issue with Boko Haram's ideology will work only if the government can draw disaffected youths away from the AK-47. The NSA's economic programme aims to do this, starting with 2 billion naira (\$12.3 million), but with a further 60 billion that can be made available from other agencies for projects, said Soji Adelaja, NSA special adviser on economic intelligence.

They include mobile medical trucks, cash for the orphans and widows of Boko Haram's victims, and a programme employing 150,000 youths to fix roads and rebuild police stations.

Parts of Nigeria that are completely besieged by the insurgents are off-limits, but there are other vulnerable areas where the programme can be rolled out, Adelaja says. "We are deploying in areas that are safe, and where the community has some resilience against Boko Haram."

The death of Boko Haram's founder Mohammed Yusuf in police custody transformed what had been a clerical movement into an armed rebellion in 2009. Akilu says Yusuf disliked "Western" science which he saw as contradicting the Koran, especially evolutionary theory, the fact that the world is round and the process of evaporation, because "rain is a gift from God".

Getting schools to show how science and religion can co-exist, she says, is essential to combating such ideas.

Down a dirt track with crater-like potholes on the outskirts of Kaduna lies the iron-roofed Focus 1,2,3 International School. Twelve classrooms packed with desks take 25 children each.

Secular education is between 7.30 a.m. and midday. After lunch, Islamic schooling is between 1 p.m. and 5.30 p.m.

Muhammad Saleh, who runs the school, believes strongly in science, although he has doubts about evolutionary theory - as do many conservative Christians in the West.

Even so, his school teaches it. "I teach them evolution myself, and the parents never complain," he told Reuters. "It's education. Once children have an education they can decide for themselves what to think." (\$1 = 161.95 naira)

Eight die in three bomb attacks in Kano in 24 hour period

CSW (28.07.2014) - At least eight people have died in three bomb attacks that rocked the capital of Kano State in northern Nigeria within a 24-hour period.

According to the Nigerian Police Force, a suicide bomber "suspected to be a female" detonated a device at the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) Mega Filling Station in the Hotoro area of Kano City today, killing three people and injuring eight.

On Sunday 27 July, at least five people died and sixteen were injured when an improvised explosive device was hurled at Saint Charles Catholic church in the Sabon Gari suburb as the congregation was leaving the service. Local reports indicate the victims were a soldier who was guarding the church; a man, two women and a child. Three suspects arrested at the scene of the blast remain in custody. This was the second bombing in three days targeting the predominantly Christian and Igbo suburb. Five people died and many more were injured when a bomb exploded in the New Park Motor Park on 24 July.

Also on 27 July, a young female suicide bomber dressed in a black hijab detonated explosives after being challenged as she approached a police check point near the North-West University, injuring five officers.

Festivals marking the end of Ramadan were cancelled following Sunday's bombings.

On the same day, Boko Haram operatives are reported to have overrun Garkida Town in Gombi Local Government Area (LGA) of Adamawa State.

Elsewhere, the government of Cameroon has increased security in the north of the country after Boko Haram launched a sustained attack on Kolofata Town on 27 July and abducted several people, including the wife of the country's deputy prime minister, her maid, a local traditional ruler and five members of his family. Deputy Prime Minister Amadou Ali and his wife had travelled to Kolofata to celebrate the end of Ramadan. While Cameroonian soldiers managed to rescue the deputy Prime Minister, they were unable to rescue his wife. According to local reports, two of Deputy Prime Minister Ali's brothers may have died during the attack, along with at least 14 others.

The assault on Kolofata Town was the third by Boko Haram in northern Cameroon in three days and is the latest involving kidnapping. In May, suspected Boko Haram members abducted ten Chinese workers, who remain missing.

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) said, "We extend our heartfelt condolences to the families of those killed in the recent bombings in Kano. As the raid on Kolofata Town illustrates, Boko Haram poses a transnational security threat, and we urge continued collaboration between Nigeria and its neighbours to reinforce security on their borders and to jointly formulate an effective strategy to uncover the group's hideouts and release its hostages. We continue to call for a surge in troop numbers, in order to protect rural towns and villages which remain targets of Boko Haram's violent and nihilistic campaign."

Nigerian conflict: Is business the answer?

RFBF (19.07.2014) - In Nigeria, businesses and economic development NGOs are working to stop widespread religious violence between Christians and Muslims, which has already taken hundreds of lives and threatens to thrust parts of the country into civil

war.

For instance, in Adamawa State in northeast Nigeria, groups like the Yola Innovation Machine are helping a new generation of entrepreneurs create businesses. The need is great. Young adults in many of Adamawa's poor rural and marginalized communities lack the necessary entrepreneurial skills they need to break out of the poverty trap that often feeds violent extremism. The majority of youth in the area have no employment. In Adamawa, and throughout Nigeria, the population doubles every 30-35 years, so assisting people to create their own jobs is perhaps the most immediate solution to unemployment.

The Yola Innovation Machine and others are working in this direction. For instance, they helped create and nurture a new business called [Yola EcoSentials](http://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/12/aun-nothing-waste) (YES - See <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/12/aun-nothing-waste>), which recycles discarded materials into sellable goods such as purses, mats, handbags and wristlets. The goods are made from "plarn," a yarn spun from recycled plastic grocery bags. The venture results in multiple social goods because every item sold by Yola EcoSentials generates much needed income and employment, and at the same time helps protect the deteriorating ecological environment.

In the Plateau State in the country's center, Muslim and Christian business people are cooperating to work around religious violence. In Jos, Plateau's capital, there is an unwritten rule that when religious tensions flare up, Christians and Muslims should not cross certain city boundaries. But this can be devastating for the fresh produce vendors and other businesses, which serve people on both sides of the divide.

In response, Muslim and Christian business people have taken it upon themselves to work around these limitations, risking their lives and not just their livelihoods to keep business moving across the religious divide. For example, Madam Ngozi, a vegetable seller and widow raising seven children on her own, often cannot go to the market to restock her supply of vegetables due to religious violence or warnings of possible violence. However, a cell phone call to her Muslim supplier, Mallam Yahaya, can solve the problem. They find a discrete place to meet, agree on a price, and make the transaction.

Still, many are skeptical that businesses can ultimately make much of a real difference in Nigeria. "On what basis could it work?" asks Clement Nwankwo, a political analyst who heads the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre in Abuja. "There is no peace in the northeast. Can any construction company go in there to work?"

But U.S.-trained Nigerian economist Soji Adelaja argues that business can be an important part of the long-term solution to violent religious extremism currently exploding in northeast Nigeria today. Mr. Adelaja, born in Lagos, recently [returned](#) to his homeland after 34 years in the United States to help put together what the government calls a "Marshall Plan" to counter the extremist violence and bring prosperity. The concept being put forward is that an improved economy and more opportunity could be an effective tool in countering the advances of groups like Boko Haram, the radical Islamic organization that recently made headlines around the world when it kidnapped 200 girls.

Gunmen torch churches, kill scores In Nigeria

By Haruna Umar and Michelle Faul

The Huffington Post (29.06.2014) / http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/29/boko-haram-attack_n_5541272.html - Suspected Islamic extremists sprayed gunfire at worshippers and torched four churches Sunday in a village just miles from the town where more than 200 schoolgirls were kidnapped, witnesses said.

At least 30 bodies have been recovered but more are turning up in the bushes, where people tried to escape from Kwada village, said a member of a vigilante group that has had some successes in repelling attacks.

"They killed dozens of people and burned houses after attacking worshippers," survivor Mallam Yahi told The Associated Press by telephone from Chibok town, to which he escaped.

Some of the church buildings destroyed included the Protestant Church of Christ in Nigeria, the Pentecostal Deeper Life Bible Church and Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa, which is Hausa for Church of the Brethren in Nigeria, Yahi said. The last was started by American missionaries from Illinois in the 1920s.

Yahi said the attackers went on to neighboring Kautikari, where they gunned down villagers and burned down homes. The vigilante said they had not yet reached Kautikari so did not know what the death toll was there.

Police spokesman Gideon Jubrin said he could not confirm the attack because bad communications have kept officials from reaching the nearest security post at Chibok, though Associated Press reporters were able to make cell phone calls to the town. Chibok is the town in northeast Borno state from which more than 200 girls were abducted in April. Officials say 219 girls remain captive. Kwada is 10 kilometers (six miles) and Kautikari seven kilometers (four miles) away.

Angry Chibok residents said soldiers were slow to respond to news of the attack, and the vigilantes said that once they reached Kwada, the soldiers refused to confront the extremists directly, only shooting at them from a distance outside the village. They spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals from the military.

Boko Haram extremists attacked a military camp in the neighboring local government area of Damboa last week and killed at least 51 soldiers. Survivors said they came in armored personnel carriers mounted with anti-aircraft guns and were armed with rocket launchers and submachine guns much heavier than the soldiers' AK47 assault rifles. The insurgents abducted many soldiers who remain missing, they said.

Boko Haram extremists are demanding the release of detained fighters in return for the kidnapped girls. Nigeria's President Goodluck Jonathan has been criticized for the slow reaction to the abductions and failure to swiftly rescue the girls. The United States has drones flying to help locate them and other nations have sent experts to help, but negotiations appear stalled.

Nigeria's military has said it knows where they are but fears any military campaign could get them killed.

Jonathan on Sunday condemned other recent attacks — Friday's bombing of a hotel that local reports identified as a brothel in Bauchi state, also in the northeast, and sectarian killings of sedentary farmers who are mainly Christian by alleged Fulani Muslim herders in northern Kaduna state.

"The president commiserates with all the families who lost loved ones in the heinous attacks and extends his heartfelt sympathies to all those who suffered injuries or lost

their properties during the wanton assaults on Bauchi and Kaduna States," said a statement. He promised the attackers would be brought to book.

Jonathan made no mention of the near-daily attacks Boko Haram extremists have been mounting in the area around Chibok, an enclave of mainly Christian people in the majority Muslim north of the country. Bauchi and Kaduna states are governed by Jonathan's ruling People's Democratic Party while Borno is held by an opposition governor.

A year-long military state of emergency in three northeastern states, all held by political opponents of Jonathan, has failed to curb the 5-year-old Islamic uprising that has killed thousands of people. The militants have increased the tempo and deadliness of attacks this year, with more than 2,000 people estimated killed compared to 3,600 in all four previous years.

Boko Haram also has increased its theater of operations to bombings in several northern towns and the capital, Abuja, in central Nigeria. Politicians say some attacks in central Nigeria are being mounted by extremists disguised as Fulani herdsmen.

Boko Haram is blamed for last week's bombing of a shopping mall in Abuja, the capital in central Nigeria, that killed 24 people. Boko Haram claimed two separate bomb attacks at an Abuja bus station in April that killed more than 120 people and wounded about 200.

The extremist want to enforce an Islamic state in Nigeria, Africa's biggest economy, the continent's biggest oil producer and its most populous nation of about 170 million people divided almost equally between a majority Muslim north and mainly Christian south.

Faul reported from Lagos, Nigeria Associated Press video journalist Lekan Oyekanmi contributed to this report from Abuja.

Christian communities in Borno state targeted by Boko Haram

CSW (04.06.2014) - Christian communities in the Gwoza Local Government Area (LGA) of Borno State, north east Nigeria are under sustained attack from the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram.

Nine people died on 1 June when Boko Haram gunmen stormed the morning service of the Church of the Brethren (Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria, EYN,) in Attagara village, near Gwoza Town. The nine men were reportedly members of the church's security group. In a subsequent exchange, several assailants were killed and three captured. According to emerging reports, sect members attacked Attagara again on 3 June to avenge these deaths, practically razing the village before moving on to substantially destroy most of Amuda Village and attack Ngoshe Village.

Also on 1 June, sect members attacked Gwoshe Town in Gwoza, burning down two EYN churches and several homes and shops. According to the News Agency Morning Star, prior to these attacks 21 Christians were killed during an assault on a Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) building in Gwoza Town on Sunday 25 May. The following evening, eight people died and several were wounded when Boko Haram gunmen [stormed Chinene village](#) in Chikide-Joghode-Kaghum Ward, destroying six churches and razing several homes.

Last Sunday's attacks occurred less than 24 hours after the burial of the Emir of Gwoza, Idrissa Timta. The Emir was assassinated in an ambush by Boko Haram members on 30 May as he rode to Gombe State in a convoy with two other Emirs to attend the funeral of the recently-deceased Emir of Gombe. In an indication of the degree of insecurity in the area, the Borno State Governor, one of the few dignitaries to attend the Emir's burial, was accompanied by 150 soldiers and special police squads, passing 16 deserted towns, villages and hamlets before reaching Gwoza, while family members remained in Maiduguri.

Shortly before his death the Emir had spoken of an increase in terrorist attacks in Gwoza and called for military patrols. However, local Christians had been calling for increased security for well over a year. Isolated communities in the Gwoza Hills have been particularly hard hit by terrorist violence. In April 2013, three church leaders from COCIN and one from EYN were shot dead by gunmen on motorcycles while relaxing near church premises. In June 2013, sect members armed with explosives and petrol bombs attacked the Hwa'a, Kunde, Gathahure and Gjigga communities in the Gwoza Hills, torching their churches, and slitting the throat of a retired COCIN pastor in Hwa'a following his refusal to convert to Islam. The sect also assassinated the village heads of Kurana Bassa and Damboa. In April, two people were killed and two churches were torched in the Hrazah and Hemba communities. In October 2013, a nurse and a prison guard were killed in their homes in Gadamayo Ward. In a November 2013 open letter to the Borno State Governor accusing him of negligence, the Gwoza Christian Community Association (GCCA) said Boko Haram had destroyed 46 predominantly Christian villages in the area, forcing more than 14,000 Christians to flee elsewhere in Nigeria or into neighbouring Cameroon.

In April 2014, Boko Haram members reportedly raised the sect's flag in Gwoza's Ashigashiya Ward, declaring it their headquarters. Morning Star also reports that in April, Bitrus Yah, an EYN pastor, was abducted and is still missing, and the wife of an EYN pastor and their teenage son who were abducted on May 11 near Gwoza Town have also disappeared. In May, Boko Haram attacked Limankara Village, burning shops and homes belonging to the Christians, including the homes of the District Head, the Village Head and a former councillor, all of whom are Christians. Also in May, sect members attacked the border town of Jibrilli, killing four Christians.

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), said, "We offer our condolences to those who lost loved ones in last Sunday's attacks. Gwoza LGA is clearly under a sustained assault and the unrelenting series of attacks provides further evidence, if any were needed, of Boko Haram's strategy of religious cleansing targeting of indigenous Christian communities of north-eastern Nigeria, as well as its appalling disrespect for traditional rulers. This persistent targeting of communities on the basis of religion may amount to a war crime and is a clear violation of their right to freedom of religion or belief. It is vital that the Nigerian government ensures adequate protection so that that all of its citizens can exercise their right to freedom of religion or belief without the threat of abduction or death."

Bombs kill dozens in Nigerian Christian district and Jos

Boko Haram suspected; president pledges coordination with international forces

World Watch Monitor (21.05.2014) /

https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2014/05/article_3147518.html/ - At least 5 people were killed May 18 by a bomb blast in the Christian district of Kano, in Northern Nigeria.

That attack was followed by an even more deadly one on May 20, when two bomb explosions rocked the city of Jos, in Nigeria's heartland. Two bomb blasts were reported, one in a cargo truck and the other on a minibus, within minutes of each other. Early casualty reports, none yet confirmed, ran as high as 118 killed.

The May 18 attacker in Kano triggered the suicide bomb at about 9:30 p.m. in the Sabon Gari area of Kano, the capital of the Nigerian state of the same name. Local residents and witnesses said they heard a loud explosion, followed by sounds of chaos.

Kano State Commissioner of Police, Aderenle Shinaba, said three men, a 12-year-old girl, and the bomber were killed by the blast.

Seven people were injured, four of whom have been treated and released.

The police tally of fatalities is contested by local media, which have reported between 10 and 25 killed in the attack. Conflicting reports over the number of victims is frequent in Nigeria, as security authorities tend to report lower numbers of casualties.

The blast, which occurred as dozens of people attended the opening ceremony of a new hotel, could have been even more deadly. But the bomb, placed in a car, exploded too far from the crowd to cause greater casualties.

No group has claimed the responsibility for the Kano or Jos attacks, but they bear the hallmarks of the violent Islamic sect Boko Haram, responsible of the abduction of more than 200 school girls in Chibok in April.

"This is another attack targeting Christians because the majority of people living in Sabon Gari are Christians. Any attack in this busy area will hit members of Christian community," a Church leader, who asked not to be named out of concern for his safety, told Watch Monitor.

Sabon Gari is a Christian enclave within Kano, the commercial nerve centre of northern Nigeria, a mainly Muslim region. It has been the target of several Boko Haram attacks.

In July 2013, at least 12 people were killed in multiple explosions. Three months earlier, suicide blasts at a bus station in the same district claimed at least 25 lives and injured 60. The bus station is primarily used by passengers heading for the mostly Christian South of the country.

Sabon Gari symbolized a sanctuary of liberty for all those – Christians, moderate Muslims and foreigners – who feel oppressed by Sharia, the Islamic Law, adopted in 2000 amidst of a wave of radicalisation of Islam within 12 northern states of Nigeria.

Unlike other areas of Kano, the Sabon Gari district has a large number of churches, along with shops, restaurants, hotels — as well as bars and brothels. That last attraction has made the area particularly irksome to the Hisbah, or Islamic police, whose activism in enforcing Islamic principles has made headlines. In November the Hisbah smashed nearly a quarter-million beer bottles in a public ceremony, as part of a crackdown against "immoral" behavior. In April it staged a mass wedding of 1,000 couples to reduce the state's "marital problem."

The Sunday-night bomb attack in Kano came a day after President Goodluck Jonathan, along with leaders of neighboring Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Benin, pledged during a meeting in Paris to step up cooperation to target the Boko Haram insurgency. The United States, United Kingdom and the European Union have pledged technical assistance.

Boko Haram's five-year campaign to impose Islamic law in Nigeria has led to thousands of deaths. Its attacks have spread from the Northeast stronghold of Borno State to central Nigeria. Dozens were killed in two separate bombs blast on the outskirts of the capital Abuja in recent weeks. Some analysts have said the group is behind deadly attacks carried out by ethnic Fulani herdsmen in the states of Plateau, Kaduna and Taraba in recent months.

Boko Haram is suspected of taking its campaign beyond Nigeria on May 17 when it attacked the town of Waza, about 15 kilometres inside Cameroon. Ten Chinese engineers were kidnapped, and a Cameroon soldier was killed.

On Monday, May 19, as life in Sabon Gari attempted to return to normal, police in Kano said they had averted "another devastating bomb blast" by neutralising a Mitsubishi station wagon loaded with explosives.

Nigeria: Violence erupts in southern Kaduna

CSW (12.05.2014) - Violence erupted today in Kachia Town, headquarters of Kachia Local Government Area (LGA) in southern Kaduna, despite the imposition of a 24 hour curfew yesterday by the Kaduna State government following clashes between Muslim and Christian youths.

On 11 May, Muslim youths demolished Nassara Baptist Church after discovering that part of the fence of an Eid prayer ground situated close to the church had been damaged, and blamed this on the congregation. In retaliation, Christian youths set fire to two mosques. As violence raged, at least two homes and several shops were also set ablaze. According to a local source, the owner of one of the homes was an elderly lady who lost everything she owned apart from the clothes she was wearing.

A 24-hour curfew was immediately imposed on Kachia LGA in order to avoid the crisis spreading to other parts of the state. However, violence broke out again on 12 May amidst claims of several people being shot dead by soldiers, who are allegedly behaving in a partisan manner. Burnings and killings are reported to have continued throughout the afternoon.

Predominantly Christian southern Kaduna has been prone to episodic violence since electoral violence broke out along religious lines following the 2011 presidential elections. For a time this appeared to have eased. However, on 2 April 2014, a 24-hour curfew was imposed on Kafanchan Town after local youth reacted angrily to the discovery, by law enforcement agents, of weaponry in a truck carrying Fulani herdsmen to the area.

In addition, villages in southern Kaduna experienced night attacks by Fulani gunmen on a fairly regular basis, with local communities consistently complaining that despite receiving timely distress calls and often being stationed close by, security forces generally arrived after an assault had ended. In several instances, fears were articulated of the security services being complicit in the violence. Distrust occasioned by perceived official complicity or inability to protect contributed to the emergence of retributive violence. As the 2015 elections loom, there are fears of renewed violence similar to 2011. One local source lamented: "we seem to be going back to the old times again."

Andy Dipper, Chief Operating Officer of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), said, "CSW is deeply disturbed by the news emerging from Kachia. We urge the security forces to ensure they maintain and are seen to be maintaining an even-handed approach in

addressing this issue. It is vital that justice is administered fairly and that those responsible for the destruction are held to account, regardless of creed. We call for cool heads to prevail and for local leaders to be proactive in calming their respective communities and in encouraging peace and reconciliation."

More than 70 killed in Abuja bus blast

BBC News (14.04.2014) - More than 70 people have been killed in a bomb blast at a crowded bus station on the outskirts of Nigeria's capital, Abuja, officials say.

The explosion happened as commuters were about to board buses and taxis to go to work in central Abuja, the BBC's Haruna Tangaza reports.

Eyewitnesses said there were dead bodies scattered around the area.

Suspicion immediately fell on the Boko Haram Islamist militant group, which has staged previous attacks in Abuja.

However, most of its attacks have been in the north-east of the country.

Officials earlier said two separate blasts had ripped through the terminal, but later said the damage may have been caused by just one bomb.

Abbas Idris, head of the Abuja Emergency Relief Agency, told the BBC that so far they have confirmed 71 people dead and 124 injured.

'Red alert'

Police spokesman Frank Mba gave the same figures, adding that 16 luxury coaches and 24 minibuses had been destroyed.

Eyewitness Badamasi Nyanya said he had seen 40 bodies being evacuated; other eyewitnesses say they saw rescue workers and police gathering body parts.

Investigators believe the explosives may have been inside a vehicle, according to Charles Otegbade of the Nigerian Emergency Management Agency (Nema).

The blast ripped a hole 4ft deep (1.2m) in the ground of Nyanya Motor Park, some 16km (10 miles) from the city centre, and destroyed more than 30 vehicles, causing secondary explosions as their fuel tanks ignited and burned, the Associated Press news agency reports.

Ambulances have been taking the dead and injured to nearby hospitals.

In a statement, the police said they were on "red alert" and had increased surveillance at "all vulnerable targets within Abuja".

'Terrible'

Eyewitness Mimi Daniels, who works in Abuja, said: "I was waiting to get on a bus when I heard a deafening explosion then smoke," she told Reuters.

"People were running around in panic."

Another eyewitness told the BBC: "I have never seen [anything] like that in my life. It was just terrible... We were just running helter-skelter. So somehow I think that they planted something inside one of the buses there."

"So there are many dead shot down at the scene of the accident. And as you can see now some of these casualties... we are hoping, we are praying they will be ok. We saw some ambulances bringing corpses to other hospitals."

No group has taken responsibility for the attack, but Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan blamed Boko Haram.

Visiting the scene, he vowed that the country would overcome the insurgency.

This year, Boko Haram's fighters have killed more than 1,500 civilians in three states in north-east Nigeria, says the BBC's Will Ross in Lagos.

Boko Haram has hit Abuja several times before, including an attack on the United Nations building in 2011.

The Nigerian government had said the violence was now contained in a small area of the north-east.

But the latest bomb in Abuja could be worrying evidence that the Islamist militants are determined to expand their area of operation, our correspondent adds.

Kaduna villages' death toll rises to 150, including pastor's wife and three children

"We must not despair under these brazen attacks" says Nigerian Governor

World Watch Monitor (24.03.2014) - The death toll following a massacre across three villages in central Nigeria a week ago has risen beyond 150, according to the deputy Chairman of the Kaura Local Government Area in Southern Kaduna.

Suspected Fulani herdsmen raided three mainly Christian villages Ugwar Sankwai, Ungwan Gata and Chenshyi (known also as Tekun) late last Friday night (14th March).

240 houses were set ablaze, alongside three churches, one ECWA (Evangelical Church Winning All) and two Anglican. The wife and three children of the pastor of the ECWA Church, Rev Likita Riku were killed, and burnt beyond recognition.

The victims were buried in three different mass graves after inter-denominational prayers last Sunday.

On Tuesday, March 18, our reporter visited the area: three days after the massacre, he saw that the survivors were still highly traumatized. The affected villages, comprised of mainly farmers and small scale traders, were deserted (an undermined number of food stores were also looted). Dozens of those affected were sleeping in a primary school, some of them were with relatives in nearby areas.

Meanwhile hundreds of relatives and sympathizers arrived to commiserate with survivors. The ECWA pastor was still in a state of total shock, unable to speak to other relatives and a number of church officials who came to try to support him.

Surviving children, who were still crying, asked where their parents, brothers, sisters and friends were: many were hacked to death.

Explaining how the killings occurred, a survivor, Emmanuel Tonak, said, "We were fast asleep when we heard gun shots and chanting of 'Allahu akbar' [God is great]. Suddenly we came out and saw them advancing and some houses in flames. They came around 11 pm. I escaped into the forest, when they came I started hearing cries and gun shots."

Government National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) workers also came to provide some relief: notably food, mattresses, blankets and mosquito nets.

NEMA has registered about 2,000 people displaced by the attack: its Zonal Coordinator Alhaji Musa Ilallah acknowledged that more may be needed, due to the scale of destruction.

"Although the materials may not be sufficient, we urge the people to accept them and to try to embrace the spirit of forgiveness and love one another."

Attacks carried out by Fulani herdsmen in central Nigeria have reached an unprecedented level this year. (About 35 people were killed and a Catholic Church was attacked by Fulani armed men in several villages last Sunday afternoon 16th Feb in Taraba State, on Nigeria's eastern border).

Some analysts point to the use of guerrilla warfare tactics, aimed at wiping out an entire community. Women and children were clearly attacked, and in some cases prominent families - such as community or religious leaders - were targeted.

The Kaduna State Governor, Mukhtar Ramalan Yero, who was on his way to United States to address an audience on peace and security, cut short his trip to return to Nigeria. He vowed to bring the perpetrators to justice but he didn't explain how.

"We pray that God should expose the people that are causing this problem. We pray that God should touch their hearts to stop such dastardly acts or destroy their evil machinations. We must not despair under these brazen attacks. As a leader, I am not happy with such ugly situations because it is my responsibility to ensure security and safety for the entire people of the State."

The Secretary of the Kaduna State Chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) Rev. Sunday Ibrahim, has condemned the massacre.

"The killing is barbaric and unjustifiable. We are mourning and condemn in strong terms these serial killings. As Christians we are not preaching violence, but urging the government and security agencies to rise up and face the reality of things. It is clear they have religious motives and the government must protect our people's religious freedom to the letter."

The national president of Southern Kaduna People's Union (SOKAPU) Dr. Ephraim Goje has denounced a 'jihad' declared by Fulani on Christians in Southern Kaduna.

The security forces were accused of being slow to intervene, leaving enough time for the assailants to withdraw. According to survivors, the attackers have vowed to come back. Despite heavy security reinforcements, the prospect of further violence seems high.

Nigeria attacks kill more than 150

Fulani, Boko Haram suspected in weekend of violence against several villages

World Watch Monitor (17.03.2014) - More than 150 people have been killed since Friday in central and northern Nigeria in separate attacks on villages populated by a concentration of Christians.

On Friday, March 14, gunmen raided three villages in Kaduna state in central Nigeria, killing at least 114 people. The attackers opened fire on the villages of Ugwar Sankwai, Ungwan Gata and Chenshyi at about 11 p.m., according to Daniel Anyip a local government official cited by Reuters.

Anyip said the attackers were from the Fulani, a West African ethnic group of herdsmen, largely Muslim, that has a history of land grievances with Nigeria's indigenous Christians and others. The settled farming communities targeted by Fulani for several years are largely Christian. Nigeria's Catholic bishops say the religious dimension of the running conflict is a byproduct of more fundamental herdsmen-farmer disputes over land, according to the Vatican-run Fides News Agency.

Most of the victims in the three villages were burned beyond recognition, according to sources cited by the BBC. Nigeria's Channels Television reported that 114 of more than 150 victims have been buried in a mass grave.

Fulani also are suspected in attacks on several villages Sunday afternoon in Taraba state, southeast of Kaduna on Nigeria's eastern border. About 35 people were killed, and a Catholic Church was attacked, according to the Nigeria Daily Post. The Post cited a man who escaped the attacks as saying the raids were a Fulani response to tensions in next-door Benue state between the Fulani and the Tivs, a farming ethnic group, some of whom have adopted Christianity.

Also on Sunday, militants suspected to be part of Boko Haram killed two people in Pela Birni village in Borno state, in Nigeria's northeastern corner. Boko Haram is an armed insurgency that aims to set up Islamic law across Nigeria's north, and has been blamed for the deaths of thousands of Nigerians, Christian and Muslim, since 2009.

Pela Birni is populated by a concentration of Christians, reported Nigeria's Vanguard newspaper.

"The gunmen invaded our village at about 10 o'clock in the evening on Sunday, they started shouting 'God is Great,' " The Vanguard quoted a resident of the village as saying. "In some houses, they did not shoot at the residents but ordered them to vacate their houses and set them ablaze, saying 'We are here for God work.' "

Two churches and a number of houses were burned, according to news reports. The Vanguard said the incident was confirmed by Andrew Usman Malgwi, chairman of the Hawul Local Government Area, which encompasses Pela Birni village.

Nigeria's churches will not stay silent during violence, leader says

Boko Haram attacks continue in north, killing dozens

World Watch Monitor (12.03.2014) - Nigeria's largest church network is calling on the country's president for more protection from Boko Haram attacks.

The president, meanwhile, is calling for more prayer.

"We will not keep silence amidst persecution Christians are facing," Rev. Ayo Oritsejafor, president of the Christian Association of Nigeria, told World Watch Monitor on March 7.

"The killings in Northern Nigeria are condemnable and act of wickedness to humanity," Oritsejafor said. "It is unfortunate that worshippers are being killed in their homes and places of worship. We are not happy with this trend and will continue to pray to God to bring an end to this excruciating situation we are going through in Northern Nigeria."

Deadly attacks have been carried out on an almost daily basis in central and northern-eastern States of Nigeria. On the night of March 8, three churches were burnt down to ashes in an attack attributed to Boko Haram in Fota town, in the Gombi Local Government area of Adamawa state.

The attackers, suspected to be from the militant Islamic Boko Haram insurgency, also burnt down a police station and killed seven police men before moving to the churches, said Rev. Lawrence Dim, a Catholic priest in the area.

"Many of the people have fled the area, but [the attackers] burnt down three churches: there is EYN and LCCN Churches and one other church. They also injured some people and killed some," Dim told World Watch Monitor, though he did not estimate the number of victims.

On Feb. 26, at least 14 people were killed in coordinated attacks by heavily armed Boko Haram fighters on Kirchinga, Michika and Shuwa villages in Adamawa State. Many properties including three Catholic churches were set on fire. More than 400 were killed in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states in February.

In Central Nigeria, widely called the Middle belt, the predominantly Christian Berom community has sustained heavy loss following increasing attacks by suspected Fulani herdsmen.

Eighteen people, most of them women and children, were killed on March 4 and 5 in four villages — Dorok, Gwon, Gwarama, and Gwarim; all in the Riyom Local Government area of Plateau State. Among the victims were eight people of the same family. The assailants, wearing military-style uniforms and armed with sophisticated weapons, burnt more than 200 houses, churches and other places of prayer.

According to one survivor, who identified himself as Peter Daniel, the attackers vowed to annihilate residents who returned back to their villages.

Across Plateau state, at least 163 people have been killed in attacks by suspected Fulanis since the beginning of the year. Each wave of violence brings renewed criticism, from the Christian Association of Nigeria and other quarters, that Nigerian security forces are not doing enough to stop the killings.

Of Nigeria's estimated 160 million people, about 70 million are Christians. The CAN is their most representative umbrella group, comprising notably five major denominational groups: the Catholic Church in Nigeria, the Christian Council of Nigeria, the Christian Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, the Organization of African Instituted Churches, and the Evangelical Church Winning All.

Rev. Oritsejafor, the CAN president, appealed to government and security agencies to be proactive towards protecting lives and properties, and to prosecute the perpetrators.

On Feb. 5, Nigeria President Goodluck Jonathan sacked his army chiefs, replacing them with new generals with orders to crush Boko Haram. More recently, a presidential spokesman acknowledged the conflict with Boko Haram is a "war situation" and that the army is dealing with a "serious enemy."

On March 9, President Goodluck Jonathan called for more prayer to defeat the insurgency.

"We need more prayers to end terrorism. With prayers and the measures put in place, we will surmount the challenges", the president said in a speech at the opening session of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, in Abuja, the federal capital.

The government's inability to put down the Islamist surge has raised widespread criticism from religious and political leaders. Violence is expected only to increase as federal elections scheduled for February 2015 approach.

The 2011 election Jonathan, a Christian from Nigeria's south, prompted unprecedented violence across the largely Muslim north in which at least 170 Christians were killed, hundreds were injured and thousands displaced, and more than 350 churches were burned or destroyed by mobs.

Deadly attacks tied to Islamist militants shake Nigeria

The New York Times (02.03.2014) - Dozens were killed, including many children watching a soccer match, in a series of deadly bomb blasts in the northern Nigerian city of Maiduguri on Saturday, officials said. The Islamist group Boko Haram was blamed for the attacks, which were the deadliest in months in the sect's birthplace.

Gunmen from the group also struck a nearby village, Mainok, at the same time Saturday evening, a local official said, storming in on trucks, burning houses and killing at least 51. The death toll from the two attacks was more than 100 and rising, officials said.

In the Maiduguri bombings, children bore the brunt of the explosions, according to the health commissioner for Borno State, Dr. Salma Anas-Kolo. The youths had gathered at a makeshift stadium in the Gomari neighborhood to watch a soccer match when a bomb went off in a pickup truck loaded with firewood, she and others said.

When people in the densely inhabited neighborhood rushed to help, a second bomb exploded, according to Maikaramba Saddiq, the Maiduguri representative of Nigeria's Civil Liberties Organization.

Mr. Saddiq said about 50 children had been killed. The explosions were powerful; Mr. Saddiq and others said they heard them from miles away.

In the Mainok attack, the senator who represents Borno in the Nigerian Senate, Ahmed Zanna, said a Nigerian military plane had mistakenly bombed fleeing villagers, killing many. Nigeria's military spokesman did not respond to calls Sunday night.

In Maiduguri, "many kids were affected," Dr. Anas-Kolo said.

A hospital official in Maiduguri, who watched as charred corpses were brought in, said: "Most of the bodies we found were very young. Small. I saw a man who lost three children." The official asked for anonymity because of the sensitivity of the situation and his position at the hospital. "There is so much of a crowd coming in now to check for their people," he said.

More than 400 people have been killed in Maiduguri and the surrounding area in less than a month as Boko Haram intensifies its campaign against civilians. The group's mission, over the course of a nearly five-year insurrection, is mysterious, beyond a generalized goal of destabilizing the Nigerian state.

In that aim, it appears to be increasingly successful, with a military unable to stop its repeated attacks despite an extensive mobilization in the country's sprawling northeast, where Nigeria borders Cameroon, Chad and Niger in the semidesert terrain of the Sahel region.

Pressure is increasing on the government of President Goodluck Jonathan to halt the attacks. But both the Nigerian government and the military appear to be at a loss about how to do so.

The military has been faulted for adopting too passive an approach, failing to staff guard posts, taking hours to respond or sometimes even running away in the face of the attacks, as citizens have reported to the Nigerian news media in recent weeks.

That scenario appears to have been repeated in the Mainok attack Saturday night, about 40 miles from Maiduguri, according to Mr. Zanna.

"The villagers were calling the security, telling them these people" — the Boko Haram — "were coming," Mr. Zanna said. "They are approaching our village. But nothing" — no military — "was coming, so most ran into bush."

When the Boko Haram entered the village, "they burned the houses and killed anyone sight," Mr. Zanna said.

In running into the bush to escape, Mr. Zanna said, a Nigerian military plane "bombed them."

"Maybe they mistook them for the Boko Haram," he said. "It was very bloody."

Sunday night, Maiduguri was in shock, officials said. The Gomari neighborhood "is a devastated area," Mr. Saddiq said. "Everything has been destroyed."

"People are very shocked and scared," Dr. Anas-Kolo said. "People feel that these Boko Haram can just come attack, and the military people are never there," she said.

Dozens dead as violence continues in central Nigeria

Fulani tribe accused of attempting to 'wipe away entire community'

World Watch Monitor (27.02.2014) - At least 43 people have died in two separate attacks as sectarian violence continues in central Nigeria's Plateau state.

Fourteen people were killed when gunmen attacked Rapyem village in the early hours of Feb. 20. The victims were fast asleep when the attackers stormed into the village with guns and machetes, local media reported. All the victims were Christians.

Two days later, in the early hours of Feb. 22, gunmen attacked villagers living along the highway linking the local governments of Barakin-Ladi and Bokkos. Twenty-nine people were killed as they slept and a further 17 were injured, Julius Bala, the leader of a vigilante group of youths, told local media.

The attackers were repelled following a fierce battle with security forces, the spokesman of the Special Task Force, Captain Salisu Mustapha, told reporters.

Although the identity of the attackers is unknown, Fulani herdsmen are suspected of carrying out both attacks, which targeted Berom communities. Intercommunity clashes are frequent in this central state of Nigeria, between the mainly Christian indigenous Berom communities and the Muslim-dominated Hausa/Fulani tribe.

"Usually we end up saying the attackers are unknown because there has not been the chance to arrest any of them, but we cannot be far from the truth to say that they were Fulanis," Rev. Soja Bewarang, Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria in Plateau state, told World Watch Monitor. "We are truly sad and continue to condemn the action of the attackers. So many were killed for no reason. We do not know to whom to report as everybody that matters is aware of the situation. We keep looking up to God for our protection and an end to the matter."

The Berom community is comprised mostly of farmers, whereas the Hausa/Fulani minority are predominantly herdsmen.

Their rivalry over access to natural resources has been exacerbated over time, despite the deployment of a Special Task Force, a joint Army and police unit aimed at tackling the widespread violence in Nigeria's so-called Middle Belt, on the dividing line between the mainly Christian south and predominantly Muslim north.

At least 163 people have been killed in attacks by suspected Fulanis since the beginning of the year. The tactics used in the attacks have resembled those employed in guerrilla warfare, with attackers taking the community by surprise, striking and then soon disappearing, according to Yunusa Nmadu, Executive Director of Christian Solidarity Worldwide in Nigeria.

"Families are targeted because the whole idea is to wipe away an entire community. In some cases prominent families such as community or religious leaders are targeted so that the followers can be weakened," he said.

Nmadu added that the sophistication of the weapons used hinted that the attackers were acquiring them from another source.

"They must have some very wealthy sponsors that are faceless," he said. "It might also be that the Fulani herdsmen have been infiltrated by Boko Haram and are recruiting them for such attacks."

Boko Haram, which aims to create an Islamic state in Nigeria, has carried out deadly attacks in recent weeks, including the latest yesterday (Feb. 25) at a [school in Yobe state](#), where dozens of boys were killed.

Though both Muslims and Christians have died in Boko Haram's attacks, Nmadu said their natural obstacle to achieving an Islamic state would be the Christian religion and the security forces who have sworn to protect the sovereignty of the country.

On Feb. 20, the Islamist group, whose attacks have been concentrated on north-east and central Nigeria, threatened to extend its insurgency to Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta in the south.

"You will in coming days see your refinery bombed," warned its leader, Abubakar Shekau, in a video.

President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency in the three northern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe in May 2013, deploying the army to the region, but without significant impact. The recent upsurge in violence in the region has led to increased criticism of the government's inability to root out the militants.

"The authorities have so far failed to fulfil their task of ensuring peace and security to Nigerians in every area of the country," Mgr. Ignatius Ayau Kaigama, archbishop of Jos and president of the Nigerian Episcopal Conference, told the Catholic news agency, Fides.

However, Nmadu said he remains optimistic. "I believe that Nigeria will come out of this crisis strong, though unfortunately many will have to pay with their blood," he said. "Military action alone will not win the battle. The war is also an ideological war."

Boko Haram kills dozens of boys in school raid

Dormitory attacked hours after president says army is in control

World Watch Monitor (24.02.2014) - Islamic militants stormed a Nigerian secondary school campus early Tuesday, locked a boys' dormitory and set it on fire, killing those who tried to flee and burning the rest alive.

News accounts report that suspected Boko Haram militants killed at least 43 young men during the pre-dawn attack at the school at Buni Yadi, in the northeastern state of Yobe. A Christian charity active in Nigeria said its sources expect the death toll to rise to 100 or more.

"I heard the cries of some people outside the school even before they invaded the school," said a student who managed to escape, as quoted by Open Doors International, which provides aid to Christians who live under pressure because of their faith.

"I suspected that they caught some people on their way to the school, and sensed danger, so I jumped over the fence of the school and crawled into a ditch and stayed there praying and listening," the student is quoted as saying. "From where I was hiding I could hear other students crying at the top of their voices. I saw fire on the roofs of the hostels and other buildings in the school. I was also counting myself among the dead because some attackers came from behind and I heard them passing very close to where

I was hiding. But God saved my life. After they killed the students and burnt the structures they fled.”

Various news accounts said the attackers shot or slit the throats of the boys trying to flee the burning dormitory. Others died amid the flames. An unverified number of others were wounded. Photos posted on Twitter, purporting to be of victims of the Buni Yadi attack, showed the bodies of teenaged boys lined up on the ground in pools of blood.

The women’s dormitories were spared violence, the Associated Press reported. The AP, citing school spokesman Abdullahi Bego, said the intruders told the women to leave the school. Several buildings on the campus were set ablaze, according to news reports.

The school was closed and surviving students sent home. Parents were streaming to the school to find their children.

The AP also said Ibrahim Gaidam, governor of Yobe state where the attack occurred, said Nigerian soldiers had abandoned a checkpoint near the school before the assault began. Yobe and two other northern states have been under a state of emergency since May 2013.

Following a Feb. 15 attack on the Borno state village of Izghe that left 121 dead, Borno Gov. Kashim Shettima declared Boko Haram has better equipment and weaponry than the Nigerian Army. On Monday, just hours before the midnight raid at Buni Yadi, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan said Shettima is wrong.

“If we pull out the military from Borno state, let us see if [Shettima] will be able to stay in the government house,” Jonathan said.

“It is quite worrisome,” he conceded. “Surely we’ll get over it.”

Since 2009, the Boko Haram insurgency has killed thousands of people in its campaign to rid the country of Western influence and impose strict Islamic law. Though Nigerians of every religion and ethnic group have been attacked, Boko Haram has directed some of its violence toward Christians. It’s unknown whether Tuesday’s raid on the school was directed at Christians specifically, though Open Doors said local church sources confirmed Christians were among the casualties.

The attack revived memories of a September 2013 attack on the Agricultural College campus in the Yobe town of Gujba. About 30 gunmen stormed the dormitories, roused the sleeping students, gathered them into a single place, and shot them. At least 65 students were killed.

Nigeria’s deadly winter

Exceptional violence prompts Christian groups to insist on protection

World Watch Monitor (14.02.2014) - The new year has begun in exceptionally violent fashion in north-eastern Nigeria, prompting Christian organisations to renew their pleas for better government security.

Boko Haram, the militant group that wants to set up Islamic rule across Africa’s most populous country, has waged several attacks on specifically Christian targets in 2014’s early days:

Jan. 26, Waga Chakawa village, Adamawa state: Attackers stormed St. Paul's Catholic Church during mass, blocked the main door, detonated homemade bombs, and opened fire. Some victims had their throats slit.

"My brother was slaughtered like [a] ram," Moses Yohanna told the Associated Press.

"The intruders locked the church, fired guns at those trying to flee, and cut the throats of others," the Catholic bishop of Yola, Stephen Dami Mamza, told the BBC. "They set off bombs and for the next four hours, burned houses and took hostages."

News reports differ on the precise number of people killed, but some report the death toll is as high as 53.

Jan. 31, Sabon Gari Yamdula village, Adamawa state: Militants broke into an evening prayer service at Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria, or the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria, and started shooting. The pastor and 10 members of the congregation were killed. The attackers attempted to burn the village, but were driven away by armed residents, including youth.

Jan. 31, Manchok village, Kaduna state: A Christian family of seven was killed by attackers described to news media by witnesses as being Fulani herdsmen. The Fulani are a West African ethnic group, largely Muslim, that has a history of land grievances with Nigeria's indigenous Christians and others.

In addition, Boko Haram is suspected in recent attacks that have killed Nigerians indiscriminately, including:

Jan. 26, Kawuri, Borno state: Gunmen armed with military rifles and bombs raided the village. They fired on residents and burned hundreds of houses, leaving 85 people dead, then disappeared into the surrounding forest.

Jan. 31, Kuthra village, Borno state: A bus ran over a homemade bomb on the road near Kuthra, killing seven and injuring others.

In all, 367 people have been killed at the hands of Boko Haram in 22 separate incidents during the first six weeks of 2014, according to the Christian Elders Forum of Northern States.

"Not a week has gone by this year that our Christian brothers and sisters in Northern Nigeria have not been threatened, beaten and murdered," said a forum statement, signed by its chairman, Olaiya Phillips, and national secretary, Emmanuel Danjuma Subilim.

"They have been killed for who they are and what they believe," the statement read. "They have been murdered because they were determined to worship. On [an] almost daily basis we are both shocked and appalled to learn of yet another act of violence perpetrated against innocent members of our community as well as our Moslem neighbours."

The forum called on Nigeria's federal and state governments to "fulfil their obligation as enshrined in the constitution and guarantee the protection of all Nigerians and their freedom to worship in safety". It insisted that "none of the Armed Service Chiefs should sleep until Nigerians of all faiths in Borno State can sleep".

Separately, the Christian Association of Nigeria issued a communiqué on Feb. 12 noting that across Nigeria's north-eastern and central states, gory stories of killings by shooting and the burning of Christian houses and their churches remain the same.

"No fewer than 30 people have also sustained various degrees of injuries in Plateau," a state in central Nigeria, said association General Secretary, Rev. Musa Asake, reading from the communiqué.

"The federal government should come up with an efficient and enduring system that can overwhelm the resurgence of Boko Haram gunmen and Fulani herdsmen who are prowling villages, shooting and killing innocent Christians, particularly those living in the northern part of Nigeria," Asake said.

Nigeria: entire family murdered in a village attack in Kaduna

CSW (31.01.2014) - A family of seven was murdered when armed Fulani tribesmen attacked a village in southern Kaduna State on 30 January.

According to reports received by Christian Solidarity Worldwide-Nigeria (CSW-N), Manyekrun Village in the Sabon Garin Manchok District of Kaura Local Government Area (LGA) was attacked at around 11pm last night. The assailants murdered Mr Abin Kaawai, his wife Ruth Abin, and their children, Indip, Emma, Cletus, Bitrus and Dauda. CSW-N also reported that the area is extremely tense following the murders, as angry young men set fire to the homes of some local Fulanis.

Attacks by armed Fulanis on villages in Kaura LGA, which have been ongoing since 2011, appear to have increased in frequency and intensity. During 2013, at least 19 people were killed, an unknown number were injured and an estimated 4000 displaced when armed Fulanis attacked Mafang and Zilang villages over the Easter weekend. Nine villages were attacked and around fourteen people were killed in the Telak District of Kaura LGA on 13 September. Then on 27 September, fourteen people were killed during attacks on Tsokong and Zagwong villages in the Zangang District. The increasingly sophisticated weaponry and coordination employed by the assailants, and the fact that both churches and schools were destroyed during attacks in September 2013, have given rise to speculation of the increasing involvement in these attacks of Boko Haram elements.

Kaura LGA borders Plateau State and is in relatively close proximity to Riyom, Bokkos and Birkin Ladi LGAs, where night attacks on non-Muslim villages have occurred regularly since 2010. This year, two people were killed and sixteen severely injured when gunmen stormed a New Years Eve service at a Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) church in Maikatako village in Bokkos LGA. On 6 January, 33 people were killed, several were injured, around 40 houses were burned down, and livestock was either slaughtered or looted during an armed attack on Shonong Village in the Bachit District of Bokkos LGA. The assailants struck the village in the morning, after most men had gone to the fields. Consequently, most of the casualties were elderly, female or minors.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "Our thoughts and prayers are with the relatives and friends of Mr Abin Kaawai and his family, and with the people of Shonong and other areas that have suffered attacks. It is deeply concerning that the perpetrators

are still able to operate with relative impunity in this geographical location. Worse still, this long-term absence of security and justice is now engendering reprisal attacks, adding to a general sense of lawlessness. We urge the security services to formulate arrangements that will ensure the protection of remote communities. Given the geographical proximity of these targeted areas, any new security arrangements must include a comprehensive and unified strategy encompassing Kaduna and Plateau States and parts of southern Bauchi State, if this is not in place already."

Gunmen kill worshippers at Nigeria church

Al Jazeera (27.01.2014) - Islamic fighters used explosives and heavy guns to attack a village and worshippers during a Christian church service in Nigeria's northeast, killing at least 99 people and razing hundreds of homes, officials and witnesses said.

The attacks in Borno and Adamawa states resulted in one of the highest death tolls in recent attacks by fighters who are defying an 8-month old military state of emergency in three states in northern Nigeria designed to halt an Islamic uprising there.

Attackers set off several explosions in Kawuri village in Borno state after launching their assault near the weekly market as vendors were packing up on Sunday night, the security official said.

He said 52 people died and the entire village was burned down, including 300 homes. He also said two improvised explosive devices that were left behind went off Monday morning, narrowly missing security personnel who were collecting bodies in Kawuri.

The official blamed suspected Boko Haram fighters for the attack.

A police official who evacuated wounded victims confirmed at least 52 people were killed and 16 wounded. Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they are not permitted to speak to reporters.

Ari Kolomi, who fled from his village, which is 70km outside Maiduguri, the Borno state capital, said, "No house was left standing" by the more than 50 men who attacked, armed with explosives and guns.

Kolomi was searching for relatives in the village to make sure they had survived the attack.

State Police Commissioner Lawan Tanko confirmed the attack but said he was awaiting details on the casualties.

Also on Sunday, fighters in Adamawa state, south of Borno, stormed a church during a Sunday morning service in Wada Chakawa village.

They fired guns, set off explosives and took residents hostage, said the Reverent Raymond Danbouye, a spokesman for the Catholic Diocese of Yola. He said about two dozen people were killed and buried on Monday.

Local Chairman Maina Ularamu said official recovered 45 bodies including those of two police officers. He urged calm, saying: "I believe security operatives are on top of the situation."

Suspected Boko Haram members set off explosives and fired into the church, then burned houses and took residents hostage during a five-hour siege, residents said. "They used explosives during the attack on worshippers, and many people lost their lives," said villager Moses Apogu.

Another resident said some people were taken away and later killed.

General Rogers Nicholas, commander of a local brigade said officials were still tallying the death toll and that troops were deployed to track the attackers.

Nearly 200 people have been killed this month in attacks by suspected members of the Boko Haram network in the area around Maiduguri.

The city is the birthplace of the group, whose name in the local Hausa language means "Western education is forbidden".

A January 14 car bomb exploded in Maiduguri, killing about 70 people.

Officials blamed Boko Haram, though the state governor suggested it was the work of political opponents.

Other attacks have forced the flight of hundreds of villagers in about 30 farming communities around Maiduguri. Some of the displaced are camping on the outskirts of the state capital.

More than 5,000 refugees from the violence have fled to Cameroon and Niger this month, the UN said last week.
