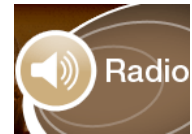


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Policemen stand guard at the police headquarters in Jos in March (© 2009 AFP)

One dead in fresh sectarian clashes in central Nigeria

05/04/10 23:34 GMT

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Fresh clashes erupted Monday between groups of Christian and Muslim youths in Nigeria's central city of Jos, leaving one dead as security forces restored order, a senior state official said.

"There was a clash, a very minor clash that led to the death of one youth, a Christian youth," Information Commissioner for Plateau State, Gregory Yenlong told AFP.

Police spokesman Mohammed Lerama also confirmed the attack, which appeared to have been staged on a group of Christians returning from a church rally, but he did not give any details.

The military and police swiftly moved in to stamp out the unrest which broke out around 7:00 pm (1800 GMT) in the Nassarawa Gwom area, the epicentre of the January clashes.

The sizes of the clashing groups could not be immediately established.

"Unknown to the Christian youths some people just blocked their way along the road and started chanting war songs," said Yenlong.

"Security forces came in and brought the situation under control. Unfortunately it was the security forces that killed the youth," he said. He said another person who was wounded was being treated for cuts, but he could not establish what caused the wounds.

More forces have been deployed, the information chief said.

Hundreds of people have died in sectarian violence in Jos and its environs since January.

Last month police said over 100 people -- mainly Christians - were killed by Muslim Fulani cattle herders, although state officials say at least 500 perished in the attacks targetting Christian villagers.

In January, over 300 people -- mostly Muslims -- died in clashes in and around Jos.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, is divided almost in the middle between the two faiths. Plateau, of which Jos is the capital, is a de facto buffer as it straddles the mainly Muslim north and predominantly Christian south.

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