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Boko Haram: Five dead, 732 escaped during **prison** invasion – Police

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•Yuguda warns sect members to leave state or be flushed out •Police ban religious processions in Yobe



Five persons died while 732 inmates escaped during Tuesday's invasion of Bauchi prison by suspected members of Boko Haram sect, police have said. This is as Governor Isa Yuguda of Bauchi State has asked sect members to leave the state or be flushed out. Danlami Yar'Adua, commissioner of police in Bauchi State, stated this on Wednesday in Bauchi while briefing newsmen on the onslaught on the prison by the suspected group.

Yar'Adua said that the five persons comprised a soldier, a policeman, two prison warders and a civilian. He stated that three other persons sustained injuries while some of the inmates who escaped during the stampede had started returning on their own. "Investigations into the incident have commenced," the police boss said. The sect blamed for the attack, Boko Haram, which means 'Western education is sinful' in Hausa language, had launched an uprising in Borno last year.

Twenty inmates were re-arrested, he said, while another 11 suspected sect members were also detained. "The prison had 762 inmates at the time of the attack," Bauchi state prison service director, Mohammed Ahmed, said, adding that "732 escaped, leaving 30." Referring to the sect, he said, "all the Boko Haram suspects on remand have escaped. There were 150 of them." About a dozen military and police checkpoints were set up on the road toward the city of Bauchi, where the attack occurred, on Wednesday.

"About 50 men with machine guns came to the prison site, forced the prison open and released all the prisoners," one Bauchi resident said, asking not to be named. "They came in large numbers, heavily armed, and began shooting at the prison gate," the guard, Salisu Mohammed, said. "Some of us were hit while others fled." He said the attackers "gained access and moved from cell to cell, breaking in and freeing the inmates. They set fire to a section of the prison and burnt the vehicles parked outside the gate." One resident said officers were among those shot.

"They shot dead a handful of policemen at the gate and forced their way in," resident Isa Hassan said, saying he lived across from the prison. "From my house, I could see bodies and the injured being loaded into a truck." He said the alleged sect members were chanting "Allahu Akbar" -- or God is great -- when they arrived. Residents said calm returned to the area Tuesday night, though military and police were occasionally firing into the air as they locked the area down.

"There was heavy fighting between the attackers and the security forces which lasted for almost an hour. It was

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quite terrifying," resident Usman Ahmad said. Residents took cover to avoid being caught in the crossfire and to keep from being mistaken for one of the sect members, he said. Recent shootings had signalled the sect might be preparing to strike again.

The killing of several policemen in recent weeks, and of two traditional rulers in the past week, had already raised fears in Maiduguri that **Boko Haram** was making a return. Security has been tightened in Maiduguri, with the police and army carrying out joint patrols and a dusk-to-dawn ban imposed on motorcycles, which have been used by gunmen to carry out the recent attacks. Last year's uprising by **Boko Haram** began with attacks on police posts, and police were among the victims of the recent attacks by motorcycle-riding gunmen in Borno.

The 2009 uprising was crushed by a police and military assault, with hundreds eventually killed and the sect's headquarters and mosque left in ruins. Meanwhile, Governor Isa Yuguda of **Bauchi** State inspected the **prison** on Wednesday and warned members of the sect to leave the state or be flushed out.

The governor also visited the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Teaching Hospital, **Bauchi**, where he sympathised with the injured victims receiving medical attention. He directed that they should be given free medical attention and sympathised with the relatives of those who lost their lives in the attack. The Emir of **Bauchi**, Rilwanu Suleiman, has also appealed to his subjects to remain calm and abide by the law. The Yobe police command has banned religious processions before, during and after the Sallah celebrations, the command's public relations officer (PPRO), Adamu Ali, has said. Ali said on Wednesday in Damaturu that the ban was imposed to prevent miscreants from taking advantage of the ceremony to cause a breach of the peace.

"We are also providing full security in all the praying grounds across the state to ensure a peaceful Sallah celebration and security of lives and properties," he said. Meanwhile, security has been beefed up in Damaturu metropolis and in the state generally to curb the menace of undesirable elements.

Ali said, "More officers and men of the force had been deployed for intensive surveillance and patrol of the state. "The command had also deployed more personnel to nipping points, strategic locations and is adopting the stop and search strategy to enhance security in the state."

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