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Deaths as police and sect clash in Bauchi, Nigeria

At least 20 people are thought to have died in clashes between security forces and members of a religious sect in the northern Nigerian state of Bauchi.

Some eyewitnesses said as many as 37 people had been killed.

The fighting came after local people told authorities they were alarmed by open-air preaching by the religious sect, which is known as Kala Kato.

Such preaching was banned in the state after an uprising by another sect, Boko Haram, earlier this year.

Hundreds of people were killed in the subsequent fighting across northern Nigeria.

The BBC's Caroline Duffield reports from Lagos that Kala Kato is a non-conformist Muslim sect made up of poor tradesmen, labourers and other working people.

Some residents in Zango, just south of the city of Bauchi, have said that in recent days the mood of their preaching had become aggressive.

The violence there began on Sunday morning. After some initial shooting the security forces retreated, before returning in greater numbers.

Members of the group had armed themselves with machetes and cutlasses, and appeared ready to fight armed police and soldiers, she adds.

A spokesman for the Bauchi state governor said the local military had been deployed, though other accounts spoke of a feared police unit, the Special Anti-Robbery Squad.

The Associated Press news agency cited Bauchi state official Mohammed Maigari as saying sect members had gone on the rampage to demand the release of their leader.

The sect leader had been arrested in connection with the killings of several Boko Haram members, AP reported.



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