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Nigeria religious clashes 'kill 500' near Jos

Some 500 people were killed in the weekend's revenge attack after religious clashes near the Nigerian city of Jos, local officials say.

The figure had previously been put at about 100 - it is always difficult to get accurate figures for such clashes in Nigeria.

Officials say three mainly Christian villages near Jos were attacked from nearby hills by people with machetes.

There is a long history of local tension between Muslims and Christians.

The attacks are said to have been in revenge for the killing of several hundred people around Jos in January.

Acting President Goodluck Jonathan has put security forces on alert to stop the flow of weapons to the area.

The AFP news agency reports that troops have entered the villages, which are now said to be calm.

Many of the dead in the villages of Zot and Dogo-Nahawa are reported to be women and children.

Mark Lipdo from the Christian charity Stefanus Foundation said the village of Zot had been almost wiped out.



Many of the victims were cut with machetes, doctors said

JOS, PLATEAU STATE

Deadly riots in 2001, 2008 and 2010

City divided into Christian and Muslim areas

Divisions accentuated by system of classifying people as indigenes and settlers

Hausa-speaking Muslims living in Jos for decades are still classified as settlers

Settlers find it difficult to stand for election

Communities divided along party lines: Christians mostly back the ruling PDP; Muslims generally supporting the opposition ANPP

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