

News

Sectarian clashes in Taraba claim eight, 40 seriously wounded

...state government imposes curfew on town

Christians and Muslims have clashed again in Taraba leaving eight people dead and 40 seriously wounded, with six mosques and one church also torched, police said on Wednesday.

In the latest sectarian violence, fighting broke out Tuesday between Muslim and Christian youths in Wukari, a town in Taraba State, over the building of a mosque on the premises of a local police

headquarters.

A Christian mob opposed to the construction of the mosque, razed it, Taraba State police commissioner, Aliyu Musa, told newsmen in the state capital, Jalingo.

Muslims responded by attacking a nearby church, leading to the eruption of violence between the two sides, Musa said.

"From reports at our disposal, eight people have been killed and 40 others seriously

injured in the violence while six mosques and one church were burnt," Musa said.

Police sent in reinforcements and the situation was calm on Wednesday, he said.

Meanwhile, the state government has imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew on Wukari while it investigates the unrest, Yemi Ajayi, deputy police spokesman in the state said.

Taraba, which neighbours Plateau, is predominantly Christian.

Sectarian clashes occur frequently in the north, with hundreds of people killed in violence this year alone.

The new clashes come weeks ahead of the one-year anniversary of an uprising by an Islamist sect in Maiduguri.

Police and troops crushed the uprising by the Boko Haram sect — which has also been called the Nigerian Taliban — after four days of street battles that left more than 800 dead, mostly sect members.

Tuesday's clashes came amid calls for inter-religious tolerance from Sultan Muhammad Saad Abubakar.

"I call on Nigerian Muslims and Christians to foster inter-faith harmony and tolerance and eschew any acts capable of causing disaffection and destroying the fabric of peace and good neighbourliness among them," Abubakar was quoted as saying on Wednesday.

He made the call at an inter-

faith gathering of Muslim and Christian leaders in Owerri.

The Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, John Onaiyekan, told newsmen most of the violence "has nothing to do with religion."

Many have argued that the clashes have resulted from religion being exploited in the struggle for local power.

"It's probably people who have other agenda and are using the mosque issue," he said.