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Boko Haram kills 30 in market attack • We killed 8 members of the sect —JTF

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Suspected members of Islamic Sect, Boko Haram yesterday opened fire on civilians and set off bombs at a market in the northeastern city of Maiduguri, Borno State killing at least 30 people, a medic and a witness said.

Gunmen believed to be members of the Islamist sect Boko Haram, stormed the Baga market and opened fire indiscriminately, traders said, reporting that women and children were among the dead.

"The number of dead could not be less than 30," a Maiduguri hospital nurse told AFP.

The military confirmed the assault on the market but denied any civilian deaths, saying security forces had killed eight assailants and safely detonated bombs planted by the attackers.

"At about 1:30 (1230 GMT) this afternoon at Baga market of Maiduguri metropolis, some gunmen suspected to be members of Boko Haram attacked and shot civilians at the market," Lieutenant Colonel Hassan Mohammed, spokesman of a special military unit in the city, told AFP.

He said several people had been wounded but that there was "no civilian death at this time".

The military "immediately came to the rescue of the situation and safely detonated three bombs planted by members of the sect and shot and killed eight members of the sect."

However, one trader whose name as Mairami, said six gunmen stormed the food and commodities market and "opened fire indiscriminately. At least 30 people including women and children were killed."

Another vendor by the name Gana gave a similar account of the attack in the city, Boko Haram's stronghold.

"The gunmen just opened fire, killing people. I saw three military vans piled with bodies leaving the market. There were several explosions after the shooting," Gana said.

The attackers had accused traders of collaborating with the military following the arrest last week of a suspected Boko Haram member in the market, witnesses said.

Mairami said one gunman shouted angrily that traders had "teamed up with soldiers" to help arrest members of the sect, which has been blamed for a wave of deadly attacks in the mainly Muslim north of Nigeria.

"We have henceforth waged war against you," Mairami said the gunman had declared, before spraying bullets on both vendors and customers.

Last week, traders overpowered a gunman suspected to be a Boko Haram member and handed him over to the military.

However, the Joint Task Force (JTF) on security in Borno State said it killed eight members of the sect.

Lt. Col. Hassan Ifijeh, the JTF Spokesman, told newsmen in Maiduguri that the suspects were killed in a shoot-out at the Fish Market, on Baga road in the city.

"This afternoon, gun men suspected to be Boko Haram sect members attacked , three civilians at the Baga Road Fish Market.

"The JTF men came on rescue operation, engaged the suspects in a shoot out and succeeded in killing eight of them," Ifijeh said.

He said the JTF also detonated three Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) carried by the suspects.

"The JTF detonated three IED's and diffused several others recovered from the attackers. We also recovered large number of arms and ammunitions from them."

He said the taskforce had cordoned-off the area for additional search operation.

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“The JTF has cordoned off the entire area and search operation is still going on to uncover hidden weapons and IED.”

It would be recalled that a suspected member of the group was arrested by traders in the market last Thursday while attempting to shoot one of them.

Monday’s attempt is seen as a reprisal attack by the Boko Haram which is known to target individuals who assist in arresting or killing its members.

Meanwhile, the Acting Inspector General of Police, Alhaji Mohammed Abubakar, has ordered the immediate transfer to Abuja of the five suspects arrested in connection with Sunday’s bomb blast in Suleja.

Commissioner of Police in Niger, Alhaji Ibrahim Maishanu said this in an interview in Minna yesterday.

Maishanu said the suspects, who were arrested following a tip-off by members of the public, had since been transferred to Abuja.

The commissioner urged the public to continue to assist the police with useful information on criminals, assuring that the command would remain proactive in tackling the issue of security in the state.

He also urged the people to remain alert at all times and to report suspicious items or parcels to security agencies.

Maishanu announced a donation of N700, 000 to the families of the three police officers killed in Maje and M. I. Wushishi Housing Estate, as well as to one injured officer.

He said the money was to provide succour to the families as they await the payment of the benefits of the deceased by the police authorities.

Maishanu said the injured officer would get N100, 000, while the families of the three policemen who died would each receive N200, 000.

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so good an article. i pray that the departed 'voice of the oppressed' Ikemba of Nnewi be given a befitting burial on earth and a good place in the other world.

Submitted by OKPARA JUDITH
EZINNE on 21 February 2012

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