

Again, Jos Burns

From Andrew Agbese & Mahmud Lao, Jos

The violence that erupted last Friday evening in parts of Jos was re-ignited Saturday morning as women and students around the Farin Gada area went out to protest the killing of two students the previous day.

The demonstration turned violent when men of the special task force tried to prevent the protesters from advancing.

An eye-witness said there were also attempts to prevent some traders who had turned up at their stalls from selling, leading to clashes between Christians and Muslims at the end of which scores were killed, 24 others wounded, four filling stations, the Farin Gada vegetable market, an Islamic secondary school and some private properties, were burnt down.

The Chief Medical Director of the Bingham University Teaching Hospital, Jos, Dr George Chima, confirmed that not less than 24 persons were taken to the hospital with gunshot wounds. He said one died.

Officials of Jama'atul Nasril Islam, on their part, said they recorded 15 deaths in the violence.

A statement signed by the Assistant Secretary of the council, Barrister Ahmed Garba, yesterday said the victims died from gunshot wounds.

Our correspondents also learnt that Emmanuel Baptist Church, Anguwan Rimi, Katako junction, was pulled down while ECWA Church, Rusau, was burnt.

● 24 shot on second day of violence

● Petrol stations, churches, mosques, shops razed down



One of the buildings set on fire yesterday

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The Plateau police commissioner, Abdulrahman Akanno, however, said only 14 persons were wounded and were receiving treatment at the hospital.

The Security Task Force commander, Brigadier General Hassan Umaru, who confirmed the continuation of hostilities, said only four were hit by bullets in an attempt to bring the situation under control.

Brigadier General Umaru claimed that the students had mobilised in such large numbers that they nearly overwhelmed the soldiers.

"The situation became worse. The students tried to overrun our men and that was when shots were fired in self-defence and hit four of them," Umaru told the *Agence France Presse* (AFP) by phone.

A student leader, Victor Dazi also told the AFP that, "the soldiers came to stop the protest and started shooting into the air and 13 students were shot by stray bullets but not killed."

On Saturday, "People took advantage of the situation to burn houses and vehicles. They just burn houses of the opposite faith -- churches and mosques included," Umaru said.

The Plateau State Commissioner for Information, Gregory Yenlong, admitted that violence erupted yesterday as a result of protests by students over the stabbing of two of their colleagues the previous day.

He said the state government condemned the violence, but said anti-riot policemen should have been deployed to quell the protests instead of soldiers. Yenlong said he was not in a position to know the casualty rate, as he was not allowed to visit the scene of the violence.

One of the students who was shot on the arm said he was hit when they were protesting. He said a bullet caught his arm while



Building on fire along Zaria Road Jos today

he was running back to the hostel after soldiers started shooting.

The other parts of Jos which watched thick black smoke emanating from Zaria Road part of the town for a better part of the day, remained tensed.

Commercial activities were brought to a halt as many could not venture out of their vicinities for fear of becoming victims.

The Deputy Speaker of the Plateau State House of Assembly, Ibrahim Baba Hassan, whose workshop for the fabrication of long vehicles bodies was burnt down, also lamented the situation.

He confirmed that no less than 20 long vehicles (trailers) belonging to him were parked in the workshop before the violence and that all of them were set ablaze. He called on the people to eschew violence, saying dialogue can help in resolving disputes.

The JNI called on the Federal Government and the National Assembly to declare a state of emergency in the state, adding that the situation in Jos was threatening the corporate existence of Nigeria.

"We reiterate our call on the Presidency and the National

Assembly to, as a matter of urgency and in the interest of the continued existence of the country, impose a state of emergency on Plateau State. This is the only immediate measure left to restore sanity, peace and order in the state".

The council further lamented that the violence took place despite the presence of security personnel on ground.

But the Plateau Information Commissioner dismissed the call for a state of emergency as uncalled, saying the government was working towards finding a

solution to the problem. He added that the situation in Plateau was not different, since there had been violence in other states like Bauchi and Borno, where no state of emergency had been imposed.

Jos and its surroundings have been hit by waves of violence in recent years that have left scores of people dead.

Human Rights Watch had said last week that more than 200 people had been killed in Plateau state since Christmas Eve, when dozens died in a string of bombings and resulting clashes in Jos, the state capital.