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WUKARI CRISIS DEATH TOLL RISES TO 54

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Four more persons were reported killed yesterday by security personnel in the ongoing crisis in Wukari, Taraba State, bringing the casualty figure to 54.

A source told Daily Trust that the four were shot dead following the order given for security personnel to shoot anyone who comes out during the curfew period.

Taraba police spokesman, Joseph Kwaji, could not be immediately reached as he was said to be attending a peace meeting in but a security official corroborated the account.

Hundreds of residents are said to have fled the town for the bush and nearby communities following renewed clashes.

In a related development, the Chief Medical Director of the Specialist Hospital Jalingo, Dr Rimande Joel, yesterday confirmed that 26 victims with severe injuries had been admitted in the hospital.

Joel disclosed that the hospital's emergency unit which was already crowded with victims from Jibu and other crisis areas could not accommodate all the Wukari victims.

"We had to take some of them to the children's ward and others to the male surgical ward but we are doing everything to give them good medical care," he said.

The director said the state Acting Governor, Alhaji Garba Umar, had directed that all victims be treated free of charge.

"We have treated 13 victims from Jibu and the state government has settled the bills and made a promise to settle for all victims of Wukari," he said, adding that the staff were not enough but were very ready to do the job.

"I can't say we have enough personnel but the ones on ground are highly motivated for the job," he added.

Residents yesterday urged the state and federal governments to deploy more security personnel to quell the crisis.

Those who spoke with our correspondent lamented that the number of security personnel already in the area is grossly inadequate.

They said despite the 24-hour curfew imposed on the town, some people have continued to unleash mayhem, especially in areas where there is no security presence.

According to them, government needs to deploy more soldiers for the situation to improve to enable people go out to get food.

"We are begging the government to do that so that the curfew can be relaxed even by

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two or three hours to enable us get food. Many of us have been indoors and we have exhausted our foodstuff. Even to get water to drink now is a serious problem", a resident said.

In the same vein, the lawmaker representing Wukari II Constituency at the Taraba State House of Assembly, Ishaya Gani, called on the state government to deploy more troops to the area.

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