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Nigeria religious clashes spread

AFP - Nigeria sent more troops to the troubled city of Jos as clashes between Muslim and Christian mobs, that have left about 300 people dead, spread to new districts.

Vice President Goodluck Jonathan ordered extra soldiers to Jos late Tuesday to clamp down on the violence as authorities enforced a 24-hour curfew.

The unrest erupted on Sunday over plans to build a mosque in a mainly Christian district of the city, which has riven by sectarian tensions for many years.

Mobs have set fire to buildings while many of the fatalities were just shot dead. Muslim leaders said about 200 bodies had been taken to the central mosque in Jos.

Several hundred have been reported wounded and casualties have filled hospitals. Some clinics were reportedly running out of medical supplies.

Residents said the fighting spread during the night to areas on the fringes of Jos, capital of Plateau State.

Idris Sarki, who fled into Jos from the nearby town of Kuru Karama, said "attacks are still going on in areas in the southern parts of the city including Kuru Karama, Bisiji, Sabongidan and Kanar.

"The area I came from has been sacked, all residents like me who are fortunate have left, but many, many have been killed," he told AFP.

Other residents said they had seen the army reinforcements on the streets.

The vice president vowed the government was "determined find a permanent solution to the Jos crisis."

"This is one crisis too many and the federal government finds it most unacceptable, retrogressive and capable of further sundering the bonds of unity in our country," Johnson said in a statement released by his office.

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) lobby group urged authorities to act with care to stamp out the fighting.

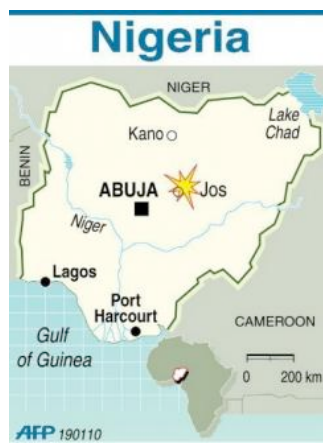
"Nigeria should ensure that its security forces use restraint and comply with international standards on the use of force in responding to the latest deadly outbreak of inter-communal violence," said HRW.



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File photo of Nigerian army soldiers standing guard in Jos, Nigeria. A global rights watchdog on Wednesday urged Nigerian security forces to use restraint as authorities ordered more troops into Jos city to clamp down on clashes that have killed nearly 300 people.



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Map of Nigeria locating religious clashes in Jos. Three days of Muslim-Christian clashes in the Nigerian city of Jos have left around 300 people dead, clerics and a paramedic said, as troops were deployed to control the unrest.

Muslim and Christian leaders and a paramedic gave tolls of nearly 300 dead but there was no official confirmation.

HRW said more than 13,500 people have died in religious or ethnic clashes since the end of military rule in 1999 in the west African country.

"This is not the first outbreak of deadly violence in Jos, but the government has shockingly failed to hold anyone accountable," said HRW researcher Corinne Dufka.

Jonathan ordered Nigerian security chiefs to "put in place comprehensive security strategies to ensure that these constant eruptions do not happen again."

Jos, situated between the Muslim-dominated north and the Christian south, has in recent years been a hotbed of religious violence in Nigeria, whose 150 million people are divided almost equally between followers of the two faiths.

In November 2008, hundreds were killed in two days of fighting in Jos triggered by a rumour that a mainly Muslim party had lost a local election to a Christian-dominated party.

At least 800 people were killed in nearby Borno State last July when security forces put down an insurrection by a Muslim fundamentalist sect.

In December, around 70 were killed in clashes between security forces and members of another radical sect in Bauchi State.

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File photo shows anti-riot policemen patrolling the streets of the central Nigerian city of Jos. Nigeria sent more troops to the troubled city of Jos as clashes between Muslim and Christian mobs, that have left about 300 people dead, spread to new districts.

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