

28 die in Plateau flood

TUESDAY, 14 AUGUST 2012 00:00 FROM ISA ABDULSALAMI, JOS
NEWS - NATIONAL



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Police ask Muslims to shun praying ground

AGAIN, some parts of Plateau State have come under severe flooding with 28 persons feared dead and scores of others declared missing. The disaster occurred in the southern zone of state last weekend, but details of the incident came yesterday when journalists visited the affected areas.



The Guardian learnt that bodies of the victims were found in villages far from the scenes of the flooding.

According to residents, close to 100 communities and a thousand houses were affected by the flood. The bridge linking the zone with Lafia, the Nasarawa State capital and Taraba State was washed off by the flood

A resident of Langtang, who identified himself as Nandom, said the rain on Sunday morning in the communities caused heavy flooding that also swept away farmlands and displaced several hundreds of people.

The Transition Committee Chairman of Shendam Local Council, Kemi Nshe, told journalists that 200 hectares of farmland were washed away by the flood in his council alone. He described the incident as sad and called on the people to be calm as succour was coming for them.

Also, Senator Victor Lar, who led journalists to the affected communities yesterday, described the incident as unfortunate and assured the people of efforts to ameliorate their plight.

Lar said since he was born, he had not seen such torrential rain and its devastating effects on both humans and farmlands like the one that occurred in Plateau southern zone.

He noted that the victims of the flooding were facing serious problems, adding that there was imminent threat of epidemic in the area and the displacement of over 1,500 people.

The Special Assistant to the Minister of Water Resources, Prof. Dimis Mai Lafia, who was on the entourage, described the havoc done by the flood as worrisome.

He said the Minister of Water Resources, Mrs Sarah Ochepe had been contacted on the incident so that she can liaise with the Federal Ministry of Works to intervene in rebuilding of the bridge

The councils cut off by the collapsed bridge are Langtang South, Langtang North, Shendam Mikang, Wase and Quanpan.

Meanwhile, the state police command has pleaded with the members of the Jamaatu Izalatil Bidah Waikamatis Sunnah (JIBWIS) to shelve their plan to observe their Sallah prayers at the Rukuba Road

Praying Ground in order to avoid any outbreak of violence.

It said the same advice was given to them last year, which they defied, an action that was followed by one of the worst violent attacks in the state.

The state Police Commissioner, Mr. Emmanuel Dipo Ayeni, made the plea yesterday at the Police Officers' Mess in Jos when he addressed Muslim and Christian leaders on how to avoid the outbreak of crisis during the Sallah celebration.

Ayeni said the meeting was not a mere routine, adding that the stakeholders were invited because the police wanted them to be sincere to one another on the issue.

In a response to one of the questions, the police boss said: "In 2011, this real Rukubu Road, people went there to pray and we know the consequence. The consequence was not palatable at all. We recorded very huge losses, both human and material. That area had been declared a no-go-area. In 2011, we made an appeal that our brothers, JIBWIS should not go to Rukuba Road to pray. Because I was new then, I did not have a full grasp of the situation and they went there and the rest is history. We recorded colossal loss of life and property.

"Then this year has come again. I want to plead very passionately. In the name of the Almighty Allah and the Almighty God you serve, I want to appeal very solemnly to the conscience of our people, especially our JIBWIS brothers. I know your pains. It is not everything that is right that is expedient. If you say you want to enforce your right, it may not be expedient enough and not that we are forcing something down your throat. But we are here because we are talking of peaceful celebration of Sallah. Any issue that is not properly resolved that may hamper or mitigate that peace, there is need for us to resolve it here right now. I want to once again plead on behalf of security agencies that we should let the issue of Rukuba Road remain as it is for now," he said.

Before the meeting, journalists were invited to the Police Headquarters to see a suspected assailant, who was arrested at Kwa-Kwi village of Riyom Local Council.

Parading the suspect, whom he named as Haruna, Ayeni said he was arrested yesterday at 2.00 a.m. while attempting to cause mayhem in the village, adding that the youths mobilised and reported the gang to the Police Division.

He said the suspect was caught with the AK 47 while some of his gang members fled.

Also yesterday, the road from Bauchi State leading to Jos was blocked for two hours by tanker drivers, who were protesting the alleged killing of one of their colleagues by a soldier attached to the Special Task Force (STF) at a roadblock.

But the STF spokesman, Capt. Salisu Mustapha, said there was a misunderstanding between a tanker driver and the soldier, which led to the blocking of the road by the tanker drivers.

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