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Thursday, 30 July 2009

Breaking News: **Fighting Halts In Maiduguri**

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43 Extremists Killed In Yobe, As Military Offensive Rages

By Paul Arhewe, George Akpayen, Adeola Yusuf (Lagos), Abdulkareem Haruna (Maiduguri) and Baba Negedu (Kaduna)

Over 180 wives of Jihadists have since last week been rescued from where they were locked up in Maiduguri, some set free during the battle waged between soldiers and the Islamists from Tuesday night to Wednesday morning.

At least 43 of the extremists died in a shoot-out with the police in a village near Potiskum in the neighbouring state of Yobe, as confirmed by Police Public Relations Officer, Muhhamed Paddah.

Maiduguri remains the base and stronghold of the Islamic sect led by Muhammed Yusuf, whose group is called Boko Haram, or sometimes Taliban.

But the security forces are also hunting down the fundamentalists in Potiskum and Kano in the violence about which the Jama'atul Nasril Islam (JNI) plans an emergency meeting on ways to help the government tackle it.

About 800 people had reportedly died by Tuesday.

JNI, the umbrella body for Nigerian Muslims, finds the conflagration „unfortunate and an embarrassment to Muslims,,, its Secretary General, Abdulkarim Mohazu, told AFP.

He said the JNI would call a meeting of Islamic scholars to discuss the mayhem and map out ways to help end such.

„Up to now we don't know who the perpetrators are, but this is totally criminal and not good at all.,,

Members of the Boko Haram oppose Western education which they consider a sin.

Forty-three have so far been killed in Hawan Malka, a police source said, referring to an area on the outskirts of Potiskum, the second largest city in Yobe.

„Had we known these people, we would have asked their leaders to show us which part of the Koran says Western education is a sin. We hope the government can help us find these people so we can talk to them,,, he added.

The extremists emerged in 2002 in Maiduguri before setting up a camp on the border with Niger Republic, from where they launched a series of attacks against the police.

Police sources said the wives of the Jihadists were brought in from Bauchi State by their husbands who deceived them that they were going for a religious crusade.

But on arrival, most of the women, who are nursing mothers, were locked up in a house on Damboa Road, and fed on bread and groundnuts.

People living close by began to notice unusual noise from the building and alerted the police.

The women refused to open the gate of the house, but police officers forced their way in and discovered several of them and children locked up in the small compound.

Later at police headquarters, some of the women told reporters that their husbands brought them to Maiduguri to attend an Islamic crusade. Others said they did not know why they were relocated from Bauchi.

One who identified herself as Ramatu narrated that „my husband asked me to pack my things and come along with him and the children to Maiduguri on a Jihad mission, but when I told him I will not follow him on such a mission he told me to give him his children and stay behind.

„Since I love my children and I don't want to expose them to danger I had to follow them here. I had never visited Maiduguri before and since we came here we were locked up here in

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Editorial/ Letters



The FG-Lagos Face-off

Why now - when general discontent is palpable in the country (the Niger Delta crisis; the paralysis in the education sector; the banks' toxic assets, constituting a threat to the stability of the sector; the bearish capital market;

Op-Ed/ Comments

Enter Superman Umaru

the Umaru Yar'Adua administration has shifted its gear to crisis mode. The President's motive seems unclear. What is becoming obvious is that he has opted to test his strength against an array of opponents on countless fronts - all at once.

Are We Trying To Pull Down Barack Obama?

Since Barrack Obama announced a visit to Africa, his relationship with Nigerian Internet bloggers seems to have soured. Initially,

before, and since we came here we were locked up here in hunger.

„We have been feeding on dry date fruits and groundnuts.,, The death toll continued to soar by the minute on Wednesday as more corpses were brought to the police station.

More than five churches have been burnt, with a Pastor of a Celestial Church feared killed.

However, the military operation is not turning out as easy as expected and, at about 8 a.m. on Wednesday, three additional armoured personnel carriers (APCs) had to be brought in by soldiers to confront the significant fire power of the Jihadists.

Some 4,000 people have fled Maiduguri after the fourth consecutive day of the fighting in a once peaceful city.

National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) Assistant Zonal Co-ordinator, Apollus Jediel, said an additional 1,000 fled their homes on Wednesday morning, bringing the total displaced to 4,000.

Jediel said the NEMA is finding it difficult to cater for those displaced, and that it has run short of relief materials.

He urged other state governments to come to the aid of the displaced people by sending in relief materials.

Kaduna State Governor, Muhammed Sambo, condemned the acts of Boko Haram that triggered the violence in the North, and also implored Niger Delta youths to drop their arms and embrace Abuja,s amnesty deal to ensure the growth of the region.

He spoke when the executives of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) visited him in Kaduna, stressing that the action of a few disgruntled elements cannot be allowed to breach the peace and wellbeing of a nation.

„I call on our people to work in line with the practices of the holy Prophet and Qur,anic injunctions. The government will not fold its arms and watch some individuals use religion to breach peace, and foment crisis.

„I therefore call on citizens to go about their normal businesses and practice their religion in the normal manner,,, he counselled.

On the Niger Delta, Sambo noted that destruction never achieves any good because even when countries go to war, they end up at the round table to negotiate peace.

„God has blessed Nigeria with a President who has wisdom and reflects deep while consulting with stakeholders before taking any decision. We support him and call every one to do same.

„Let our youths in the Niger Delta drop their arms for the development of the Niger Delta.,,

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many Nigerians interpreted the choice of 'little' Ghana, over the 'oil-producing, giant of Africa' as Obama's subtle way of rebuking Nigeria's leadership for not getting its act together,

Nigeria, A Dysfunctional, Failed State

There is no need to argue about this, Comrade Governor Adams Oshiohmo. Our former glorious Nigeria is now a failed state. Before you crucify me,

Columnist

Conversation of an Angry man June 12: Mustapha Sings A Heroic Tune

The June 12 presidential election threw up its own share of heroes and villains. And there was a fine line of distinction between the two groups.

Candour's Niche Digital Revolution And Africa,s Media (2)

Aware of the challenges posed by the new era, magazines and newspapers are changing the ways they had hitherto approached journalism. Not only have they gone online, establishing their own websites, many in a bid to cultivate new audiences have resorted to blogging some beats or sections that ordinarily would have run in print.

Scruples ...Still On Anambra

A couple of weeks ago, I did a piece here on the nature of politics and governance in Anambra State and how these combine to determine the popularity rating of the State Governor

The Roundtable CBN Rate Cut: Matters Arising

Measures recently introduced by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to check a galloping interest rate included the following: capping deposit rate at 4%,

Speaking Out The Other Pains Of Strike (1)

It was a Friday and we were in the sixth month of our strike. Our salaries had been stopped and letters purportedly dismissing us from our jobs had been handed to all striking university lecturers.

Independent Opinion Poll

Do you support Federal government amnesty to militants in Niger Delta?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Uncertain

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