

Boko Haram kills three in Customs office attack

■ Govt sets up Task Force to stop sect

■ Amnesty urges end to killings

NO fewer than three persons died yesterday when suspected members of the radical Muslim sect, Boko Haram, attacked a Customs office in Maiduguri.

Authorities quickly blamed Boko Haram, which on Sunday night dropped bombs that killed 25 people at local beer parlours in the Borno State capital. Boko Haram wants strict Shariah law implemented across the North.

The continued violence surrounding Maiduguri



• **THE SCENE OF HORROR:** Burnt motorcycles after the Dalla bombings in which 25 people died on Sunday.

PHOTO: NAN

From Abiodun Joseph, Maiduguri

has left the city in fear as the authorities seem unable to stop the group from attacking at will.

The Federal Government has raised a Task Force,

headed by Major-Gen. Jack Okechukwu Nwaogbo, to hunt down the Islamic sect.

Yesterday's attack hit the Customs office as officials held a meeting, said Maj.-Gen. Nwaogbo. The assault included explosion of bombs

and gunfire, which killed three people outside of the building, he said.

No fewer than two Customs officials were wounded in the attack.

On Sunday, Boko Haram members riding on motor-

cycles attacked three make-shift bars in the city.

Witnesses and others said about 25 people died in the beer parlour attacks. Nwaogbo declined to offer a casualty information yesterday during a news confer-

ence.

"What caused the killings of many people in the attacks were when about 10 gunmen riding seven motorcycles surrounded and

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18 more ministries likely

NEWS

Miss Nigeria at The Nation

THREE months to the end of her reign, Miss Nigeria Oludamilola Eyituyo Agbajor visited *The Nation*.

Agbajor was accompanied by a former beauty queen, Mrs. Nike Oshinowo-Soleye, who humorously described herself as 'the queen mother'. Others on the entourage are: Executive Brand Director, Didi Ocheja 2010, Project Manager Wunika Mukan and chaperone Adenike Adebimpe.

They made banter out of the fact that Mrs Oshinowo-Soleye became Miss Nigeria at about the time Agbajor was born.

The visit, said Mrs Oshinowo-Soleye, was to give a foretaste of the next Miss Nigeria beauty contest billed to hold later in the year.



• Agbajor (second left) and Mrs. Oshinowo-Soleye yesterday

PHOTO: SOLOMON ADEOLA

Amnesty urges groups to stop killings

AMNESTY International (AI) has urged Boko Haram and other armed groups in the country to stop attacking civilians.

The group said the killings were not only senseless but prohibited under international law.

A statement by the AI reads: "The warning is coming in the wake of latest deaths resulting from bomb blast at the Nigeria Police Headquarters, Abuja 12 days ago, in Maiduguri on Sunday and yesterday.

"Nigerian armed groups must stop attacking civilians.

"These killings are senseless and outrageous. Direct attacks on civilians are prohibited under international law and show a complete disregard for the right to life," said Tawanda Hondora, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for Africa.

"Boko Haram must stop its reign of terror in the country.

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took strategic positions at the beer sheds and shops and started firing at the people with their Kalashnikov rifles, before setting ablaze the entire makeshift shacks," he said.

While no arrests have been made over the beer parlour attacks, he said police arrested two men carrying explosives at a church in the city. He said they had pretended they wanted to convert from Islam.

Boko Haram, whose name means "Western education is sacrilege" in the Hausa language, is responsible for a rash of killings which have targeted police officers, soldiers, politicians and clerics in the North over the last year — including attacks on beer parlours. They have also at-

From Dele Anofi, Abuja

No cause can justify the deliberate targeting of civilians.

"Boko Haram has claimed responsibility for a spate of bombings across the country since mid-2010. In the past several weeks, dozens of people have been killed in the

attacks.

"On June 16, a church was bombed, reportedly by Boko Haram, killing three children. The group has also attacked Muslim clerics who have criticised them. Previously, the group tended to target police and other government authorities.

"In response, the Nigerian

tacked churches and engineered a massive prison break. However, authorities say attacks intensified after the April 26 governorship elections kept the same political party in power.

Senate President David Mark has said the security challenges facing the nation will top Senate's agenda as it reconvenes for the plenary session today.

The Senate President spoke when the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Ambassador Andrew Lloyd visited him in Abuja. He said Nigeria will be delighted to explore the British approach to insecurity in order to arrest the situation in Nigeria.

He reiterated the commitment of the government to ensuring adequate security to the citizenry.

security forces have carried out mass arrests, tortured suspects and detained people without charge or trial for lengthy periods.

"Amnesty International is calling on the Nigerian government to step up the protection of residents in the Northeast, and ensure the rule of law.

ICC arrest warrant for Gaddafi

LIBYAN leader Col. Muammar Gaddafi's day in office seem numbered, with the International Criminal Court (ICC) ordering his arrest. He is accused of crimes against humanity.

Gaddafi is the second Head of State on whom the warrant of arrest has been issued by the ICC, after the March 4, 2009 warrant issued on Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir.

The court said there are grounds to believe Gaddafi ordered attacks on civilians during Libya's four-month uprising.

The Hague-based court also issued warrants for two of Gaddafi's top aides - his son Saif al-Islam and intelligence chief Abdullah al-Sanussi.

Thousands of people are believed to have been killed in the conflict.

Anti-Gaddafi forces said yesterday they had launched a new push towards Tripoli, with heavy fighting near the strategic town of Bir al-Ghanam, to the southwest of the capital.

The rebel defence minister told the BBC that forces opposed to Gaddafi may also make a move on the capital from the east.

The ICC arrest warrants refer to early weeks of the uprising, from "February 15 until at least February 28".

The statement read out by presiding judge Sanji Monageng said there were "reasonable grounds to believe" that the three men were "criminally responsible" for the murder and persecution of civilians.

As the "recognised and undisputed leader of Libya", said the court, Gaddafi had "absolute, ultimate and unquestioned control" over the state.

He introduced a state policy "aimed at deterring and quelling by any means, including by the use of force, the demonstrations of civilians against the regime", the court alleged.

The warrant says that while Saif al-Islam Gaddafi holds no official position in Libya,

he is "the most influential person" in Gaddafi's inner circle.

Mr Sanussi, said the court had "indirectly instructed troops to attack civilian demonstrators" in Benghazi, the city that has become the rebels' stronghold.

There was celebratory gunfire on the streets of the besieged city as the news emerged.

"We are extremely happy that the world has united in prosecuting Gaddafi for crimes he has committed," rebel council spokesman Jamal al-Galal told Reuters news agency from the rebel stronghold Benghazi. "The people feel vindicated by such a response."

The warrants had been requested by chief ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo in May. He has said Gaddafi must be arrested in order to protect civilians.

There were celebrations across Misrata, with horns beeping, and a lot of gunfire in the air as people greeted the news from the ICC.

This still besieged city suffered a great deal at the hands of Gaddafi's forces, which have pounded the city itself and killed many civilians.

A lot of people interviewed said they believe Gaddafi should face justice in The Hague. But, when pressed, many people said if his internal or external exile or arrest would end the war quicker, they'd be happy to accept that.



• Gaddafi

Senators under pressure to stop ministerial nominees

18 more ministries likely in Jonathan's cabinet

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anything at the end of their tenure.

"As privileged civil servants close to these ministers, we are aware that the nation cannot execute the proposed far-reaching reforms of the President without scrapping the Office of the Minister of State.

"We have had it rough; that is why bureaucrats are crying out."

It was learnt that at a recent meeting, the echelon of the civil service recommended further split of ministries from 18 to 37 for efficiency in government.

A document on the proposal obtained by our correspondent yesterday states: "One of the issues that have al-

From Yusuf Alli, Abuja

ists and political hired mercenaries to stop some nominees from being cleared or to disqualify some nominees by asking questions to embarrass them and stop them.

"They have given many of us sleepless nights with offer of millions of naira so as to discredit some nominees.

"But, to some of us, this will

not in anyway affect the screening. The screening will follow the normal pattern. Once they scale through security screening, which normally would have taken care of their morals and integrity, ours is to ask questions on their state of intelligence and plans to midwife the transformation programmes of the President.

"We have also noticed that there are political opponents

and that those whose business interests are being threatened by the reforms are involved in this crusade so as to settle business scores.

"I believe that majority of the Senators that I have interacted with believe in President Jonathan's transformation programmes and will not allow any of us to be used. Those who are prepared to spend millions to disqualify some nominees or

cation Technology; Rural Development; Social Development and Employment; Investment and Trade; Defence; Tertiary Education; Basic Education; Environment; Capital Territory Administration; Finance; Foreign Affairs; Health; Information and National Orientation; Interior; Justice and Labour and Productivity.

Others are: Ministry of Mines and Steel Development; Railway; Petroleum Resources; of Niger Delta Affairs; Police Affairs; Power; Science and Innovation; Culture and Tourism; Transport; Women Affairs; Works; Youth Development; Water Resources; Land, Housing and Urban Development; Special Duties & Inter-governmental Affairs; and Primary Health Care.

the transformation agenda of the President should invest their money in charity work and leave the Senate alone.

Asked whether his colleagues share his opinion, Adeyemi replied:

"Many of us will be very much at alert to make sure that money is not allowed to play any role in this screening. We have been told that some people should not be allowed

to pass through the screening simply because they effect or carried out reforms will empower Nigeria more than foreign interests."

Asked to be specific, the senator said: "In this crusade some multi-national companies and their agents who feel some re-nominated ministers who were part and parcel of reform programmes agenda aimed at empowering Nigerians as regards local content in the process of industrialisation, should be stopped in order to kill such reforms.

"There is no gainsaying the fact that there is need for fundamental reforms in the transportation, oil and gas, housing power sectors and these reforms require highly intelligent and courageous ministers and of course, some who retained for continuity."

"Those whose business interests are being threatened should get to understand the majority of my colleagues are aware of their situation. Therefore, lobbyists are advised to steer clear of lawmakers or they will be exposed."