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Amnesty: troops killed 23 in one day attack

By <u>Dele Anofi, Abuja</u> 26/07/2011 03:00:00

-Rights group seeks probe -No evidence, says army

Amnesty International yesterday accused security agencies of killing **23** people after last Saturday's bombing by the Boko Haram sect in Maiduguri, the beleaguered Borno State capital.

The rights group asked President Goodluck Jonathan to stop unlawful killings in the state.

The bomb, allegedly planted by the Islamist group, went off in the Budum market in central Maiduguri. Three soldiers were injured.



But the AI, in a statement by its Deputy Director for Africa, Tawanda Hondora, claimed that security forces, in retaliation, **killed 23** people. The military denied it all.

The AI statement said: "The Nigerian authorities must immediately put a stop to unlawful killings by security forces. At least, **23** people were **killed** by police following a bomb blast on Saturday in the north-eastern city of Maiduguri.

"According to reports received by **Amnesty** International, the Nigerian Joint Military Task Force (JTF) responded by shooting and killing a number of people, apparently at random, before burning down the market.

"One human rights defender told Amnesty International 'soldiers went on the rampage. They shot several people and burned all their shops and properties and burned their cars."

"President Goodluck Jonathan must get a grip on the Nigerian armed forces and immediately prevent them from carrying out further human rights violations and unlawful killings

"The government must now investigate these heinous crimes and put on trial those found to be responsible for the killings. Allowing **troops** to go on the rampage will not bring to justice those who

carry out these terrible bomb attacks on civilians.

"While staying within the law, the government must step up efforts to bring to justice members of Boko Haram who wreak untold suffering on people in the middle belt.

"One wing of Boko Haram has reportedly disowned the bomb blast, saying it may have been carried out by a splinter group."

Amnesty International also pleaded with the Federal Government to check the activities of the Joint Task Force (JTF) in Borno State.

The statement added: "The JTF was set up by the federal government in June 2011 to restore order in Borno State.

"In recent months, **Amnesty** International has received numerous reports that security forces in Borno State have resorted to unlawful killings, dragnet arrests, arbitrary and unlawful detentions, extortion and intimidation.

"Following a bombing in Maiduguri two weeks ago, members of the JTF reportedly threatened to shoot residents if they failed to report planned attacks.

"House to house searches, brutalisation, unlawful arrests, killings and disappearances have been the operating practice in Maiduguri for some months now.

"Unless steps are taken to ensure security forces operate within the law and respect human rights at all times, the next time Boko Haram attacks or kills a soldier, we are likely to see the same thing happen again.

"Thousands of people living in Maiduguri have already left the city; and many more continue to do so.

"The JTF has also been accused of raping women during their operations in recent months.

"Allegations of rape of women by members of the JTF have to be investigated and perpetrators brought to justice.

"Survivors of rape and sexual violence must be provided with appropriate support and aftercare."