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35 die in military, Boko Haram clashes

Posted by: Yusuf Alli in Featured, News 12 hours ago

•Sect committing war crimes, says ICC

Thirty-five people, including two soldiers and a policeman, were killed in two clashes on Sunday night between security forces and Boko Haram. State, it was learnt yesterday.

Also yesterday, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) said Boko Haram activities amounted to crimes against humanity.

A spokesman for the military's Joint Task Force, Lt.-Col. Sagir Musa, said Boko Haram launched two attacks — one against a police base in Bama and the other against a multinational Joint Task Force station in Malam Fatori.

The military spokesman said the gun battle in Bama led to the death of one policeman and 17 Boko Haram militants. Two soldiers were wounded.

He said in a separate clash in Malam Fatori, two soldiers and 15 militants died.

There was no independent confirmation of the casualties.

Director of Defence Information Brig.-Gen. Chris Olukolade, who confirmed clashes in two places, said: "That figure of 30 deaths was not confirmed but we had clashes in those two places."

A security source, who spoke in confidence last night, insisted that the death toll was 20.

The source said: "What happened was that the Boko Haram insurgents regrouped and invaded a police station in Bama in order to take over the place and turn it into a base.

"The Special Forces, however, resisted their invasion, leading to the death of 10 people, including two soldiers.

"The truth is that Bama is a notorious base of the sect, with many cells. The locals have not been able to assist the troops because they know that the sect was well-entrenched in that axis.

"The locals do not want to risk their lives because of past incidents where many of them were killed for serving as informants.

"As for Malamfatori, the sect members made spirited efforts to overrun a military position vital to their regrouping but the troops engaged them in about 45 minutes battle.

"About 10 people, suspected to be Boko Haram members, also died but there was no casualty on the part of the Special Forces.

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"There were injuries on both sides and the greater part of Monday was spent to take stock."

Responding to a question, the source added: "These incidents have reinforced our refusal to restore GSM service in Borno State."

"A total cleansing of Borno State of insurgency is vital to winning the war against Boko Haram. The troops have been mandated not to relax at all."

The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court said after a preliminary investigation she believes that acts attributed to the Boko Haram are likely crimes against humanity.

"Information available provides a reasonable basis to believe that since July 2009 Boko Haram has launched a widespread and systematic attack that has resulted in the killing of more than 1,200 Christian and Muslim civilians in different locations throughout Nigeria," Fatou Bensouda wrote in a report issued yesterday.

She said the potential crimes against humanity include murder and persecution. But she said she will only move to a full-fledged investigation after further study and depending on whether Nigerian authorities themselves are willing and able to prosecute "those who appear to bear the greatest responsibility."

Her report was based on evidence gathered through December 2012.

Nigeria declared a state of emergency on May 14 to fight an Islamic uprising by militants in the northeast who want to impose Islamic law across a country divided almost equally between the predominantly Muslim north and mainly Christian south.

Boko Haram's centre of power is in the northeast, but last month Nigeria's army arrested 42 suspected Islamic extremists in the southwest states of Lagos and neighbouring Ogun.

Bensouda noted that while that government forces may also have violated human rights while conducting operations against Boko Haram, as of December 2012 there was no evidence they were targeting civilians.

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