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## Borno massacre: Death toll now 146

FEBRUARY 18, 2014 BY FIDELIS SORIWEI AND KAYODE IDOWU

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The death toll in Saturday's Boko Haram attack on Izghe Gwoza Local Government Area of Borno State has risen to 146 with the recovering of 40 corpses in nearby bushes.

The *Agence France Presse* had quoted the lawmaker representing the area in the Senate, Ali Ndume, as saying on Sunday that 106 people lost their lives when members of the sect laid a five-hour siege to the village which is largely populated by Christians.

But on Monday, some residents who were seen salvaging some of their property, claimed that they found many bodies with gunshot wounds and machete cuts.

"We recovered about 40 bodies in the bushes here (Izghe). Some of them had deep machete cuts and wounds that must have been as a result of gunshots," one of them, who gave his name simply as Usman, said.

Usman, who lamented the level of destruction wreaked on the village, called for an end to the incessant attacks by the insurgents and for the Federal and Borno State governments to urgently provide them with relief materials.

Our correspondent in Borno State reported that most of the recovered bodies were given mass burial by the survivors, who summoned courage to stay back in the almost deserted village.

A protocol officer attached to the Governor's office told journalists that Shettima would "be visiting the place (Izghe) on Tuesday(today)."

Meanwhile, the National Emergency Management Agency has despatched a strong team from its headquarters in Abuja to Maiduguri to complement the efforts of its officials in the North-East zone.

The Director General of the agency, Alhaji Muhammad Sidi, according to a statement, has directed the agency's Director, Search and Rescue, Air Commodore Charles Otegbade, to head for Maiduguri to supervise the provision of materials to the victims of attacks in the area.

The statement by the agency's North-East Zonal Information Officer, Abdulkadir Ibrahim, reads "In response to the rising tide of attacks around border communities in the North-East, the DG of NEMA has despatched the Director Search and Rescue of the Agency with additional members of staff from the Abuja head office to complement the efforts of the officials of the North-East zonal office, who have been working round the clock providing relief assistance to the internally displaced persons affected by the incidents.

"Within the last two weeks, camps have been created in schools and other secured locations in Alau, Kawuri, Konduga and Bama communities to cater for the IDPS.

“As the situation improves, more camps are expected to be created to cater for more people.

“The Zonal Coordinator of the agency in the North-East, Alhaji Muhammed Kanar, with members of staff of the zonal office and other stakeholders in emergency management like Red Cross and the Nigerian Civil Defence Corps, has been working hand in hand to provide succour to those affected by the attacks.”

The Defence Headquarters has however appealed to Nigerians to exercise patience with the military as it intensifies efforts to rid the North-East of insurgents.

It said in Abuja on Monday that it had stepped up aerial and land patrol activities in the hills and forests in the troubled Borno State.

The Director of Defence Information, Brig. Gen. Chris Olukolade, said in an electronic mail, that the security operatives would not relent in their efforts to wipe out the insurgents.

The Defence spokesman said that while the military was fortifying areas that could come under attack, efforts were on to increase surveillance and patrol activities in such places.

He said that some of the insurgents, who carried out the repeated killings in unprotected communities in Borno State had been apprehended and weapons recovered from them.

But Olukolade was silent on the number of arrests and types of the recovered items.

He said, “The ongoing onslaught against terrorists in some parts of the country will not be deterred by the unfortunate attacks being carried out against troops and innocent civilians by the insurgents.

“The terrorists who move from village to village attacking innocent civilians are those escaping from the onslaught against their makeshift hideout along the border and entry point from neighbouring countries.

“The fighting patrols by air and land are being stepped up in the forests and hills of the affected areas and other parts of the North-East where the Boko Haram terrorists are hiding.

“The security forces will continue to employ necessary fire power to enhance the effectiveness of the mission until the terrorists are duly curtailed.

“Meanwhile, locations that are prone to attacks are being reinforced while the general area is now under heightened surveillance and patrols.

“Some suspected perpetrators of the recent assaults have been apprehended and weapons recovered from them.

Olukolade appealed to the indigenes of the affected communities to volunteer information that could be used to track the fleeing terrorists.

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