

Boko Haram invades Kogi prison, frees 143



Scene of the Koton-Karfe Prison break in Kogi State ... on Monday

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The police and the Army have launched a manhunt for inmates of the Koton-Karfi Prison in Kogi State, who were set free by gunmen suspected to be Boko Haram insurgents.

There were about 145 inmates in the 80-year-old

prison as of 10pm on Sunday when the gunmen gained entry into the prison by blowing up its iron bars with an improvised explosive device.

A male prison officer and an inmate were injured while another inmate was found dead after the attackers left.

Twelve of those who fled were said to have returned to the prison under controversial circumstances.



[/media-credit] Another Scene of the Koton-Karfe Prison break in Kogi State ... on Monday

A prison source told one of our correspondents on Monday that the 12 returned of their own volition but the Nigeria Prisons Service Public Relations Officer, Ope Fatinikun, said they were captured.

Fatinikun added, “Unknown gunmen invaded Koton- Karfe prison between 9.30am and 10pm and immediately it happened, the acting Comptroller-General of Prisons, Aminu Suley, informed the Inspector-General of Police, Suleiman Abba, and the Chief of Defence Staff, Alex Badeh, and they ordered policemen and soldiers to beef up security around the prison and to arrest the fleeing inmates.”

The gunmen were said to have also broken some of the prison’s walls before vandalising its record office.

Our source who pleaded anonymity said sounds of gunshots caused panic close to the prison which is located on the Lokoja-Abuja Road.

According to him, the gunmen operated unchallenged for hours before security operatives arrived in the prison after they had left.

The comptroller-General of the NPS told journalists when he visited the Prison in company with Governor Idris Wada on Monday that the gunmen forcibly freed the inmates.

He said that 26 of the inmates were convicts while 119 were awaiting trial for different offences.

He lamented the congestion of the prison and pleaded with Wada to prevail on the judiciary to quicken the trial of those on awaiting list.

Wada said he would invoke his power of prerogative of mercy to set free some of the inmates.

He said that he would also urge the chief judge of the state to free some of the inmates.

The governor said security operatives were prompt in their response when they were alerted, adding that it was regrettable that much damage had been done before their arrival.

He also decried the deterioration of the prison, saying it was not good for human habitation.

The governor promised to provide beddings for the inmates who had been forced to live in sub-human conditions.

Wada urged the Federal Government to expedite action on the new Koto-karfi prison. He added that when the prison was completed, the old building which was established in 1934 would become a tourism centre.

The Koton-Karfe prison was attacked in February 2012 by Boko Haram members who freed 119 inmates.

Meanwhile, the Police in Yobe State have confirmed the killing of four persons by a suicide bomber who attacked a religious procession in Potiskum.

This figure was however disputed by the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in the town, Mustapha Lawan, who lamented that 26 people died in the incident.

The suicide bomber was said to have joined the procession by Shiites muslims celebrating the annual Ashurah (the 10th day of Muharram 1436 celebration).

The state Commissioner of Police, Markus Danladi, who addressed journalists, said that five people were injured in the blast.

He said, "The blast killed three members of the Muslim brotherhood plus the bomber. Before we got to the scene, the group had evacuated the bodies of those effected by the blast."

But Lawan told journalists on the telephone that apart from the 13 persons who died on the spot, 13 others who were among the injured later passed on where they were being treated.

Yobe State Governor Ibrahim Gaidam condemned the attack on the procession as heinous, barbaric and unwarranted.

The governor, in a statement by his media aide, Abdullahi Bego, said it was regrettable that the attack came at a time that peace was gradually returning to the state.

Gaidam, who described those behind the attack as "criminals who want to fan the embers of religious discord," called on the people to remain calm and vigilant.

The governor directed government hospitals in the area to provide immediate medical treatment to all the victims of the attack free of charge.

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