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## Muslim-Christian clashes kill 460 in Nigerian city

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JOS, Nigeria (Reuters) - The death toll after four days of clashes between Muslim and Christian gangs in the Nigerian city of Jos and nearby communities has topped 460, according to a mosque official and human rights activists.

Six military units and hundreds of police were stationed throughout Plateau state's capital city in central Nigeria to enforce a 24-hour curfew Wednesday.

While the violence had subsided, streets were deserted and many businesses remained closed in Jos, which has been the scene of similar bloody sectarian clashes in recent years.

The relative calm has allowed mosque officials to retrieve more bodies from neighbourhoods just outside Jos.

"We found more than 200 bodies gathered at the mosque in Kuru Gada Biu and 22 more at Mai Adiko," said Muhammad Tanko Shittu, a senior mosque official organising mass burials, who had earlier estimated the death toll among Muslims at 177.

U.S.-based Human Rights Watch put the number of Christian dead at 65.

Official police figures were significantly lower with 35 people dead, 40 injured and 168 arrested since Sunday.

"More troops have come in and the situation is now under control. But there are still many hoodlums dressed in fake police and military outfits causing havoc," said Gregory Yenlong, spokesman for the Plateau state government.

Vice President Goodluck Jonathan, in his first use of executive power, ordered troops to Jos Tuesday to restore order and prevent a repetition of clashes in November 2008, when hundreds of residents were killed in the country's worst sectarian fighting in years.

President Umaru Yar'Adua, who has been in hospital in Saudi Arabia for nearly two months, has been briefed on the situation, said junior information minister Ikra Bilbis.

This week's violence erupted after an argument between Muslim and Christian neighbors over the rebuilding of homes destroyed in the 2008 clashes.

The fighting is unlikely to have a big impact on sub-Saharan Africa's second biggest economy. Its oil industry is in the south and its banking sector mainly in the commercial capital Lagos.

### BURNT BODIES

A Reuters correspondent saw three burnt bodies lying on the streets in Jos

and several buildings, churches and cars destroyed by fire.

Armoured vehicles and soldiers patrolled the city, while residents ventured outside with their arms held up to signal they were unarmed.

The break in violence allowed mosque officials to retrieve dead bodies in the outskirts of the city, with 22 found in one nearby community, Shittu said.

The city's main hospital, Jos University Teaching Hospital, was forced to turn away some patients late Tuesday because doctors were too overwhelmed. "Ninety percent of the casualties were from gunshot injuries with a few from knives and bows and arrows," said Dr. Dabit Joseph, who works at the hospital.

The Red Cross has 40 staff workers and several volunteers at seven centres in Jos to help thousands of displaced residents, an agency spokesman said.

Nigeria has roughly equal numbers of Christians and Muslims, although traditional animist beliefs underpin many people's faiths.

More than 200 ethnic groups generally live peacefully side-by-side in the West African country, although 1 million people were killed in a civil war between 1967 and 1970 and there have been outbreaks of religious unrest since then.

Jos has been the centre of several major religious clashes in Africa's most populous nation.

The November 2008 clashes killed around 700 people, according to Human Rights Watch, while more than 1,000 Jos residents died in similar fighting in September 2001.

(Additional reporting by Felix Onuah; Writing by [Randy Fabi](#); editing by [Giles Elgood](#))

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