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Nigeria: Worshippers Shun Church Services in Kano

30 JANUARY 2012

Still scared and traumatised by the fatal and multiple attacks on Kano city penultimate Friday by Boko Haram, Christian worshippers largely stayed away from the churches and worship centres in the city yesterday. Over 200 people were killed by the militant sect in the attack. And so, being unsure of their safety, most Christians chose to remain in their homes despite the heavy security operatives drafted to many church premises to ensure the protection of their lives and property.

According to THISDAY investigation, it was discovered that there was low attendance in virtually all churches as only those whose homes are not far from the churches seemed to have dared to attend the Sunday church services.

Aside the fear of the unknown befalling them, the churches were largely empty essentially because investigations revealed that the low attendance was due to the fact that many people have travelled out of the state capital to their respective states of origin. For over a week now, there has been massive drift of non-indigenes out of Kano State, especially as the Boko Haram sect is still threatening more attacks.

Speaking with Mr. John Emmanuel who worshipped in one of the churches at Sabon Gari, he said: "I was in church today because I believe nothing would happen." He merely braced up for the odds to not only remain in Kano but to also go to church. And he did that alone. He had long sent his family to his home state.

Hear him: "Already, I have sent my children back to Imo State, pending the time the crisis would be resolved."

On his part, Mr. Dele Titiloye who worships at the First Baptist Church, Kano situated at France road, said: "We thank God because the situation is calm, normalcy is now returning to the state."

THISDAY also observed that the police were off the major streets in the state capital, causing some youths to take over the traffic control service at strategic places in order to ensure free flow of traffic in the state. The attacks have been largely directed at police personnel and other security agencies.

Meanwhile, hoodlums suspected to be members of Boko Haram last night attacked Nai-bawa Police Station in Kano, killing two people.

An eyewitness, who described the attack on the police station as "serious", said on the condition of anonymity that the gang stormed the place on motorbikes and some cars.

There was an exchange of gunfire between the police and the group.

Police Commissioner Ibrahim Idris said the dead were civilians. According to him, the police station was partly destroyed by the bombing.

The group launched the attack at about 6.45p.m when people were returning home to beat the 7p.m curfew time.

"There was pandemonium. People were running for safety", the source said.

Last Friday, Boko Haram attacked the Mandawari Police Station in the ancient city. Police Corporal Muhtanri Bello was killed. The joint forces of the police and the military killed four suspected Boko Haram members in return.

In the same vein, police in Delta State have intensified efforts towards ensuring a crime-free society, following directives by the acting Inspector General of Police (IG), Mr. M.D. Abubakar, to get rid of criminals and criminality, the state Police Commissioner, Alhaji Ibrahim Mamman Tsafe, has disclosed.

Already, he said a number of suspected armed robbers and other criminals had been arrested as a result of special operations embarked upon by the command, thereby reducing the level of crime drastically.



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"There is no hiding place for criminals in Delta State as we make the environment highly hostile for them," said the commissioner, explaining that life is becoming too harsh for the men of the underworld.

Tsafe said in a telephone interview weekend that soon after the taking over of the new acting IG, he directed all state commands to rid their state of criminals, a directive which Delta command takes with all seriousness.

He announced that even before the new order, the command had for long put in place a criminal tracking mechanism, a strategy which assisted in no small measure towards making the state one of the most peaceful in the country. "So, when we received the acting IGP's order it served as a morale booster to what we have been doing before," he said.

Furthermore, policemen in the state have gunned down two suspected armed robbers along Aladja-Udu bridge and several weapons including two cut-to-size rifles and 10 unexpended cartridges and a Toyota Camry saloon car with registration number CU 62 RBC were recovered from them.

According to him, the suspects on sighting police patrol vehicle, opened fire at them leading to a gun duel, but the police subsequently overpowered them.

Equally, Tsafe disclosed that three suspected pirates who disguised with army uniforms were arrested. The suspects who are now helping police in their investigation are: Stanley Sapele, Alfred Akebra and Godbless Obipada.

Their arrests followed information by the marine patrol team on duty.

The commissioner assured residents of the state of police readiness to ensure the safety of their lives and property, even as he passionately appealed to the people to report any criminal to the security operatives.

"Our main duty is to secure the society. However, this could only be possible if the citizens will co-operate with the police," he said.

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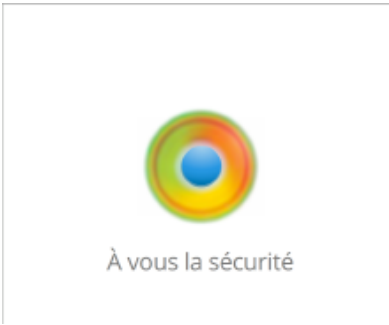
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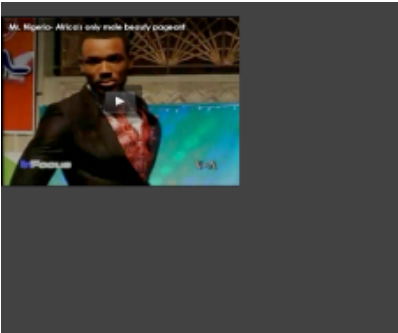
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