

TODAY'S WEATHER ☁️ **ABUJA** 22-28°C ☀️ **MAIDUGURI** 23-30°C ☁️ **ENUGU** 22-27°C ☀️ **KANO** 23-30°C ☁️ **LAGOS** 22-28°C ☁️ **PORT HARCOURT** 22-29°C

Boko Haram Agrees to Ceasefire as Gunmen Kill Eight in Borno

● *FG restates condition for dialogue* ● *Northern elders want amnesty for sect members*

Muhammad Bello in Abuja, **Michael Olughode** in Maiduguri and **Ibrahim Shuaibu** in Kanowith agency report

The Jama'atul Ahalis Sunna Lida'awati Wal Jihad Islamic sect, popularly called Boko Haram, yesterday again said it had agreed to a ceasefire with the Federal Government to pave the way for dialogue.

This will be the second time in months that the group has supposedly called for an end to hostilities, which was predicated on certain conditions being met, and had handpicked a committee that was to be headed by former military head of state, Major-General Muhammadu Buhari, to hold discussions with the Federal Government.

However, two persons, who claimed to be representing the major faction of the group led by Sheikh Abubakar Shekau yesterday met with the press in Maiduguri, the Borno State

capital.

Based on the sect's antecedent, this is the first time anyone associated with Boko Haram is coming publicly to claim affinity with the dreaded group. On other occasions, communication with or through the media has been conducted via teleconferencing.

But in a swift reaction to the sect's offer, the Federal Government yesterday restated its condition for dialogue, adding that it was in the process of appraising the terms given by the sect.

Coincidentally, just as the representatives were calling for a truce, there were reports that eight persons, including a deputy treasurer of a local government area in Borno State, were in the early hours of Sunday killed by gunmen.

One of the two persons, who met with the journalists yesterday, introduced himself as Sheikh Abu Mohammad Abdulazeez Ibn Idris, the commander in-charge of North and Central Borno of the sect.

He said the decision on the



STRENGTHENING TRADE TIES

L-R: Minister of State for Trade and Investment, Dr. Samuel Ortom; Minister of Trade and Investment, Dr. Olusegun Aganga; and Canadian Minister for International Trade, Hon. Ed Fast, during the Nigeria-Canada Bilateral Commission meeting in Abuja... yesterday

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TOP GAINERS	NGN	NGN	%
PRESCO	2.62	28.82	10
IBERGER	5.15	56.67	10
UNITYBANK	0.07	0.79	9.7
CUSTYDINS	0.16	1.82	9.6
PRESTIGEASS	0.05	0.60	9.1
TOP LOSERS	NGN	NGN	%

El-Rufai under Fire for Blasphemous Tweet

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BOKO HARAM AGREES TO CEASEFIRE AS GUNMEN KILL EIGHT IN BORNO

ceasefire came after meetings were held with the Borno State Governor, Alhaji Kashim Shettima.

In the interview with journalists in Hausa language but translated to English, Idris said: "I, Sheikh Muhammed Abdulazeez Ibn Idris, the second commander-in-charge of southern and northern Borno, after Imam Abubakar Shekau of Jamaatul Ahlil Sunna lidawati wal Jihad, otherwise known as Boko Haram, for sometimes now, we the members of Jamaatul ahlil Boko Haram sunna lidawati wal jihad (otherwise known as Boko Haram) have recently had a meeting and dialogue with the government of Borno State, where we resolved that given the prevailing situation, there is the need for us to ceasefire."

"We, on our own, in the top hierarchy of our movement under the leadership of Imam Abubakar Shekau, as well as some of our notable followers, agreed that our brethren in Islam, both women and children are suffering unnecessarily."

"Hence, we resolved that we should bring this crisis to an end. We therefore call on all those that identify themselves with us and our course, to from today lay down their arms."

He further said: "Let every member who hears this announcement relay it to the next member who hasn't heard. We have met with the Borno State Government on two occasions and the fallout of the meeting is to ceasefire."

"Presently we are going to comply with the ceasefire order and by the time we are done with that, then government security agencies can go ahead to arrest whoever they find carrying arms or killing under our name."

Idris noted that the sect was aware of the fact that some criminals had infiltrated the movement and attacked and killed people in the name of Boko Haram, adding, "We have also told the government to try to live up to our demands that our members in detention should be released."

"We hope the government will not betray us this time around, because we all know

that it was because of the continued detention of our members that this crisis has continued for this long."

He however warned that should the government fail to meet the terms of the ceasefire, the sect would be forced to resume hostilities, while admitting that the group was fractionalised.

He said: "There is a faction within us, but the larger faction of our movement is the one in support of this ceasefire. Moreover, once top members of our group, including Imam Abubakar Shekau, are in support of the need for a ceasefire, other smaller factions can be dealt with easily."

"This message, by the Grace of Allah, comes directly from the office of Imam Abubakar Shekau, the supreme leader of Jamaatul ahlil Sunna lidawati wal Jihad."

When contacted to confirm if the governor had been in meetings with the sect, the Special Adviser to the Governor, Media and Communication, Alhaji Isa Umar Gusau, said the governor had always insisted on dialogue with the group and has always tried to reach out to its leadership.

He said: "Well, I am just hearing from you, but you will agree with me that the issue is that of national security. I am not competent to speak on national security issues."

"We have a security council in Borno State; I am not a member of that council and, of course, you know as much as you will also agree with me that no governor will speak on such critical security issues, so I cannot speak on the matter."

"But what I know, which you can also confirm as journalists concerning the activities of the governor, is that from the day he became a governor-elect, even before he was sworn in, he was the first to speak on the need for dialogue as the best way out."

"Governor Shettima has been very firm and consistent in his belief as he has regularly advocated that unless we want to engage in an endless war, the best way out of the crisis is through dialogue towards a peaceful resolution."

The governor's spokesman

added: "I can confirm to you that Governor Shettima has consistently been exploring different ways to establish means of negotiating for fruitful dialogue to end the challenges."

"Anytime someone is killed, be it a civilian, security personnel of any member of the sect, Governor Shettima is deeply pained. He hates to hear that someone lost his or her family member, no matter who that person is."

"He believes that the life of every Nigerian is worth preserving. It is the hope and prayers of Governor Shettima that not just peace but indeed sustainable peace is reclaimed in Borno and the rest of Nigeria in the quickest time, because like he says, that no society can thrive without peace."

Though Gusau did not confirm that his principal had met with the members of the sect, but investigations by THISDAY revealed that the governor has held two meetings with representatives of the sect and other major stakeholders, including security agencies at the Government House, Maiduguri.

Reacting to the sect's offer to end hostilities, the Federal Government said yesterday that it may soon re-visit the issue of holding discussions with Boko Haram.

A highly placed government official, who pleaded anonymity, dropped the hint to some State House correspondents yesterday, saying the Federal Government was working towards appraising the negotiation terms given by the sect.

According to the source, the government was likely to be receptive to the sect's demands if it announces a unilateral ceasefire.

He said although the government was desirous of brokering peace, it was not in a rush to embrace the olive branch being waved by the sect.

The official, who said the government had not taken a formal position on the matter, added: "From our experience, the sect is not reliable and their word cannot be taken at face value."

"All facets of governmental apparatus would be consulted before a final decision is taken

on the matter. We are not in a hurry to jump at their offer."

He reiterated that although the incumbent administration was committed to the peaceful resolution of the problem, it was not going to negotiate with any group from a position of weakness.

He stressed that government would not relent in its employment of proactive security measures in order to safeguard the lives and property of Nigerians.

But in an incident certain to raise doubts over the sincerity of the sect, eight persons, including a deputy treasurer of a local government area in Borno State, were killed in the early hours of Sunday by gunmen.

The eight persons were killed in Gajigana community in Magumeri Local Government Area of the troubled state about 55 kilometres away from Maiduguri, the state capital.

According to residents of the town, the assailants stormed the village around 3 am and killed the treasurer, a woman and six other persons.

The gunmen were said to have selected some household in the community and carefully carried out the assassination of the eight persons.

Mallam Musa Grema, a resident of the town who spoke to journalists on the phone, said he saw eight persons, including three young men when the bodies were brought out for burial.



SPREADING GOOD GOVERNANCE

Enugu State Acting Governor, Mr. Sunday Onyebuchi (left), welcoming the Minister of Information, Mr. Labaran Maku, to the Government House during the good governance tour of Enugu State... yesterday

CBN DEMANDS EXIT PLANS FROM BANKS ON AFRICAN SUBSIDIARIES

Continuing, Okoroafor explained: "We are monitoring all banks with subsidiaries outside the country. In fact, it was a major point of discussion at the last West African Monetary Institute (WAMI) meeting."

"The CBN Governor, Mallam Sanusi Lamido, made it known that the central bank will no longer tolerate a situation where certain countries treated Nigerian banks badly by placing high recapitalisation benchmarks."

"This is because once that happens, the message they are sending is that their economy is bad and they want to use funds from our banks to

support the economy. "So all Nigerian banks have been asked to submit exit strategies for every market where they are operating."

Presently, Nigerian banks have a total of 46 subsidiaries operating on the continent. These include United Bank for Africa Plc (UBA) - 18 subsidiaries; Access Bank Plc - 8; Guaranty Trust Bank Plc (GTBank) - 5; Skye Bank Plc - 4; Keystone Bank Limited - 4; Diamond Bank Plc and Zenith Bank - 3.

Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, GTBank, Mr. Segun Agbaje, informed THISDAY recently that in

crises should compute all monies expended by them for re-imbursement by the Federal Government. "A judicial commission of inquiry should be set up to establish the remote and immediate causes of ethno-religious conflicts and prevalent insurgency."

"All persons identified to be involved in sponsoring, benefitting or involved in all forms of terrorism and insurgency be prosecuted."

"Federal Government should set up a Northern Nigeria Restoration, Reformation and Rehabilitation Programme to absorb repentant Boko Haram insurgents unconditionally and a special committee of respected northerners should immediately embark on a sympathy and solidarity tour of all states affected by insecurity in the North."

According to NDFI, Jonathan, Vice-President Namadi Sambo and northern governors have failed to show sympathy for most states ravaged by the Boko Haram insurgency.

The communiqué also revealed that the summit also advocated the death penalty or life imprisonment for indicted corrupt officials in the public and private sectors.

The communiqué was signed by a former governor of the defunct North-western state, Alhaji Usman Farouk, and chairman/secretary of NDFI, Dr. Sadiq Umar Abubakar.

EL-RUFAl UNDER FIRE FOR BLASPHEMOUS TWEET

tweeting or re-tweeting such. "By their fruits, we shall know them. Some sponsors of Boko Haram are beginning to surface. El-Rufai is not worthy to be a leader in this country!"

In another reaction, Abdul Kadir Danbaba lampooned the former minister, stating: "el-Rufai is a vile fool. Why would you re-tweet such about sacred (issues). We Muslims know it is wrong to do such. He even felt the silly and blasphemous tweet was funny when he added LWKMD."

Also, DmOvada on Facebook said: "I hope el-Rufai will tweet an apology soon" while Emeka Madunagu said: "I'm not surprised at el-Rufai's thoughtless tweet. It's unfortunate that a well-educated Nigerian like el-Rufai cannot articulate sensible views without offending religious sensibilities."

"He has tried again and again to link the bombings of churches in Northern Nigeria to Christians. Having failed, he goes ahead to ridicule the Lord Jesus Christ. I expect CAN to demand a full apology from him. It's a shame."

Another response from @dreyinker on tweeter said: "Mallam Nasir el-Rufai is a goat. He will soon receive the wrath of God. People like him are the ones supporting Boko Haram. Foolish fool."

In her tweet, @jemilatu, said: "This man can't speak for us the youths from the North. He is on his own and every true Muslim must condemn this silly re-tweet of his. It is vile and blasphemous."

In his reaction, Ibrahim Safana wrote on Facebook: "@El-Rufai: Sir, with all due respect. I get your point in this joke. But why Jesus?"

Also, Cade in his Facebook

comment said: "When we are talking of common sense, we must eschew sentiment from it... As a Christian, I really don't feel offended when joke is made of Jesus but Islam as this article pointed out has been unforgiving to anybody that jokes with the name of Prophet Mohammed and thousands of both Muslims and non-Muslims have been killed for that... Either Rufai and his cronies are impostors or naive."

Jude Bassey wrote: "You would not tweet what you do not agree with. Obviously, Nasir el-Rufai agrees with the rubbish of that tweet. This is definitely the workings of a depraved and constricted mind! Indeed, fanaticism is the outgrowth of constricted minds like el-Rufai! Very sad! I hope he would be decent enough to renounce that stupid re-tweet!!!"