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22 Killed in Renewed Boko Haram Attacks in Maiduguri

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IGP, Mohammed Abubakar

•Sect declares war on Borno, Yobe youths

Michael Olugbode

Members of the Boko Haram sect seem to be re-emerging from their hiding places in renewed attacks on Yobe and Borno States, as the suspected terrorists struck again in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, on Monday killing nine students writing examinations conducted by the National Examination Council (NECO).

In a separate attack by the group, a farming village of Alau Dam was also overrun where 13 persons comprising fishermen and tea vendors were gunned down. Monday's attacks were the third in a space of five days.

The sect had laid siege on Gwoza hill in Borno State where they killed a clergyman and burnt down four churches on Thursday, while on Sunday the terrorists attacked a school in Damaturu, Yobe State where they killed seven students and two teachers.

It was gathered that five of the students killed on Monday were sitting for the ongoing NECO exam at Ansarudeen Primary/Secondary School, a private

school in the Jajeri ward of Maiduguri metropolis.

Eyewitness accounts revealed that after storming the school, the suspected sect members opened fire on the hall, moments after the examination started. One of the eyewitnesses, who spoke anonymously with journalists, said the gunmen attacked the school at about 3 pm, forcing other students and invigilators to take to their heels.

On the same Monday, it was gathered that some Boko Haram sect members attacked Alau Dam, on the outskirts of Maiduguri killing a total of 13 persons.

An eyewitness said the gunmen ambushed the people around the dam and sporadically opened fire on them. The gunmen were said to have continuously shouted at their victims: "You are those exposing our activities to security agencies, today your days are over, as we will kill all of you."

A few weeks ago, some groups of youths on a volunteer mission arrested several members of the sect in Hausari and Gwange, among other areas of Maiduguri and handed them over to the JTF.

Alau Dam is one of the biggest dams in the state and operates a treatment plant that supplies water to the people of Maiduguri and its environs. It also supplies water to vast areas of agricultural land through irrigation to farmers living around the riverine areas.

It was learnt that among those killed were youths of Gwange ward of Maiduguri metropolis who had gone to Alau Dam to buy fish.

A resident of Gwange and a neighbour of one of the slain victims, Mallam Mohammed Musa, told journalists, "One of my neighbours was among the 13 people killed by suspected Boko Haram members in Alau Dam on Monday.

"It was yesterday after Magrib (evening) prayers that the news of the killings filtered to our community."

Meanwhile, the deadly Boko Haram sect yesterday declared war on youths from Borno and Yobe States for exposing their hideouts to security agents and killing some of their members in recent weeks.

The fundamentalist group said that in addition to their targets: the police, soldiers, all security operatives, politicians and other symbols of authority, the youths of the two states have now been added to the assassination list.

Angered by the lingering crises that had crippled social and economic activities in both states, some youths had organised themselves into vigilante groups, captured scores of insurgents and handed them over to security operatives.

But in a statement e-mailed to some Maiduguri-based journalists, Abu Zinnira, the spokesman of the Boko Haram, said they had decided to also launch a manhunt for their hunters (youths) who go by the name "Civilian JTF".

According to him, "We have established that youths in Borno and Yobe States are now against our course. They have connived with security operatives and are actively supporting the government of Nigeria in its war against us. We have also resolved to fight back," Zinnira said.

However, some of the youths who promised to fight the Boko Haram insurgents in Maiduguri said they would not be deterred from carrying out their mission and there would be no going back on the course they had started so as to bring sanity back to their beloved states.

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