

# BLOODY WEEKEND; 66 KILLED

# Boko Haram wreaks havoc

- *Jonathan commiserates, avoids brother's wedding*
- *ACF, CAN condemn killings*
- *Victims' tales of horror*

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**V**ICTIMS' tales of horror yesterday trailed Friday's bomb and gun attacks including two suicide blasts targeted at police stations, an army base and churches in three northern states.

Death toll in the attacks in Damaturu (Yobe State), Maiduguri (Borno) and Kaduna was put at 66.

The breakdown showed 63 were killed in Damaturu, two in Kaduna and one in Maiduguri.

Agency report last night quoted the Islamic group,



**RAMS, RAMS EVERYWHERE!** Serious haggling over price of ram yesterday at Gbagada ram market, Lagos, as part of the last minute rush in preparation for today's ed-il' Kabir festivities. Photo by Shola Oyelese

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## NEWS

## Boko Haram wreaks havoc, kills 66 in Maiduguri

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Boko Haram, as claiming responsibility for the Damaturu and Maiduguri attacks.

The Kaduna incident which saw two women being killed in a Catholic Church in Zango Kataf area, was, however, linked to revenge attacks.

Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) were swift in their condemnation of the attacks yesterday. President Goodluck Jonathan also cancelled his engagements yesterday in honour of those killed in the incidents. He was billed to attend his brother's wedding in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State but stayed away.

"63 people (are) confirmed dead" in Damaturu, a Red Cross official told AFP.

The Yobe attackers reportedly bombed their targets, then took on the security forces in gun battles. Residents said gunfire rang for several hours across the city after the explosions.

In a mainly Christian neighbourhood of Damaturu called Jerusalem, six churches were said to have been bombed in addition to a police station.

"It was a suicide bomb attack at one of our buildings. The attacker came in a Honda CRV and rammed into the building and explosives exploded," Suleimon Lawal, the state police commissioner said.

He did not specify the building affected, but an AFP correspondent in the city said a double-storey complex housing the police anti-terrorism unit was hit by a suicide bomber, as well as the police headquarters.

An eye witness described scenes of chaos and destruction in Damaturu.

"In fact, Damaturu is looking just like Libya ... burnt cars and buildings," said an eye witness.

"A police station and a mechanical workshop of the police were attacked. Six churches in the area were also bombed," said resident Edwin Silas, adding: "The whole city is traumatised."

Adamu Mohammed, a mason working at the police headquarters in Damaturu at the time of the attack, said he saw the bodies of five policemen as

he made good his escape after the bomb went off.

A lawyer who visited Damaturu's government hospital looking for a missing friend said he counted 60 bodies in the morgue, "all brought in yesterday from the attacks."

The lawyer, who asked not to be named, told AFP he found the friend, a policeman, among the corpses.

He said anxious relatives were flocking to the hospital in search of loved ones.

An AFP reporter who also visited the morgue said most of the dead appeared to be policemen. The suicide attack at the Maiduguri military base claimed a casualty, a soldier.

Meanwhile, a man claiming to be a member of Boko Haram yesterday, claimed responsibility for the Damaturu and Maiduguri attacks.

"We are responsible for the attack in Borno (state) and Damaturu," Abdul Qaqa told an AFP correspondent by phone.

"We will continue attacking Federal Government formations until security forces stop persecuting our members and vulnerable civilians," Qaqa vowed.

**'Killings must stop'**

Disturbed by the bloody weekend in the north, CAN yesterday asked the Federal Government to demonstrate political will to deal decisively with sectarian attacks in the country, arguing that the environment required for foreign investments may be a pipe dream if there is no peace in the nation.

In his initial reaction to the attacks, the National President of CAN, Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor, expressed shock.

According to him, "reports reaching me different parts of the North show that several innocent people have again been sent to their earlier graves and property worth millions of naira either torched or vandalized in the another orgy of religious violence."

Condoling with the governments and people of the affected states including the security agencies, Oritsejafor



From left: Comrade Joseph Evah, Grand Patron, Prof. JP Clark, the Father of Day receiving an award from Ben Murray-Bruce during the 4th Bi-Annual Convention/Award organised by National Association of Ijaw Female Students (NAIFS) Lagos at National Arts Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos. Photos by Diran Oshe.

said the leadership of CAN will soon convene an emergency meeting and come up with a more comprehensive reaction to the latest round of violence.

In the meantime, he urged the Federal Government to muster the will to deal with the killings. "We just cannot continue to put our wrong foot forward all the time and expect investors to come and invest their money in an unsafe environment", he declared.

To the governments and people of Borno, Kaduna and Yobe, Oritsejafor offered condolences while appealing for restraint.

**'No to revenge attacks'**

The ACF was unequivocal in its condemnation of the

killing of the two women in a Catholic Church in Zango Kataf, lamenting that "the endless revenge attacks in Kaduna State" was like a resort to Tara Law of an eye for an eye" that could leave everybody blind. In a message to Muslims marking the Eid-el Kabir, signed by the National Publicity Secretary of the ACF, Mr. Anthony Sani, yesterday, the umbrella organisation of all cultural unions in the North said that "the place of religion in the world is to love God and neighbours for the needs of people." regretting that killing in the state was "becoming the order of the day in parts of the state."

The statement read in part, "the ACF wishes to felicitate with Muslims over the celebrations of Eid-el-kabir that marks the end of the Muslim calendar year. "May the spirit of the commemoration inspire the needed sacrifices and unhinged love of God and humanity in our daily lives in order to please God. "One way of achieving this is to be tolerant of our differences, be they in faith, in ethnicity and about places of origin.

"After all, the place of religion in the world is to love God and neighbors for the needs of the people. May Allah help us to do just that through our resolve to work hard and make the spate of ethno-religious and communal conflicts across the



Mr. Sam Amuka, Publisher of Vanguard Newspapers (left) receiving an award from Mr. Ben Murray - Bruce, chairman of the occasion.

nation history for our common good.

"The Forum also wishes to condemn the endless circles of revenge attacks that is becoming order of the day in parts of Kaduna State. This is because a resort to Torah law of an eye for an eye would leave all of us blind. "ACF also commiserates with the government and people of Gombe State over the untimely death of the Deputy Governor, His Excellency David Miyim, which sad event occurred last Friday. "In the circumstance, there is nothing the Forum can do beyond the prosaic prayer for God to provide the family, the government and people of Gombe State, the fortitude to endure what cannot be changed. May his soul rest in peace."

**Jonathan cancels engagements**

The president, yesterday, cancelled all his engagements in honour of those who lost their lives in the Friday incidents.

Jonathan had been scheduled to attend the wedding of his younger brother Azibabariolo Jonathan in Yenagoa, the Bayelsa State capital and to also flag off this year's Christian pilgrimage at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport in Abuja later but had to put off personal attendance at the two events.

Speaking with journalists in Abuja yesterday, Special Adviser to the President on Media and

Publicity, Dr. Reuben Abati, said the president was very sad over the killings particularly at the time of Eid-El-Kabir.

"The president had to cancel all his engagements including the wedding ceremony in Yenagoa in Bayelsa State and the flagging off of this year's Christian pilgrimage to commiserate with families of those who lost their lives in the incidents and others who were injured", Abati said.

The presidential spokesman further said: "Whoever is behind the dastardly acts cannot be said to be a true Muslim, particularly at this Holy season of the Eid-El-Kabir when we are to reflect on the ideals and virtues of brotherly love, peace, harmony, selflessness, tolerance, honesty, fairness, justice and equity taught by Islam and other religions."

He dismissed insinuations that the president was not in Yenagoa to attend the wedding ceremony of his brother because he was avoiding lobbyists who may be trying hard to pressure him to intervene in the Bayelsa State governorship ticket of the Peoples Democratic Party.

According to him, the president was unhappy with the incident and he is calling on all Nigerians to eschew violence and embrace tolerance, brotherly love, harmony and peace needed to bring about development and progress of the country.

## SOLUTION

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