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NIGERIA Post-election rioting continues

As post-election violence continues in Nigeria's northern states following the victory of President Goodluck Jonathan, Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) has received information of attacks on suburbs in the Gombe State Capital and in the Kafanchan area of Kaduna State, and of continuing tension in Bauchi State.

Nigeria's presidential elections, which took place on Saturday, are being hailed by international observers as the fairest poll in decades. However, supporters of his opponent, Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), have accused the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) of vote rigging and have taken to streets since Saturday evening in what many on the ground feel are orchestrated protests. There has been fighting, burning and rioting in several states, including Gombe, Kaduna and Bauchi.

Attacks are reportedly underway in several suburbs in the Gombe State capital. Yesterday, rioters torched churches, homes and businesses, while security forces struggled to maintain order. At the forefront of the violence were the Almajeris, Islamic students who study at mosques and who are under-age, which deterred the authorities from taking more robust action against the mobs. A local clergyman described the violence as "very well planned," adding, "It's breaking out in different parts of the city at the same time. The police are trying to contain it but it is so sporadic. We keep praying. The Lord will carry us safely through this."

In Kaduna, where violence continues despite a 24-hour curfew, the Kafanchan area is said to be "on fire". Earlier in Kaduna and Zaria, churches were burned down and Christian homes and business were looted, as armed CPC supporters roamed the streets attacking supporters and officials of PDP. One man was reportedly murdered in Zaria as he tried to stop them burning a church, while yesterday Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic students were allegedly murdered in their hostels. At one point yesterday the predominantly Christian area of Kabala West, where a bomb exploded in a hotel in the run-up to voting, was reported to be besieged by armed Muslim youths. The Nigerian Red Cross informed Al-Jazeera that "many" have been killed in Southern Kaduna.

In Bauchi, where data is still being collected, Bishop Musa Tula, Chair of the Bauchi chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) reports at least 22 confirmed people killed. In Giade Local Government Area (LGA), 16 people were killed, including six members of the Youth Corps service. In Itas LGA, two members of the Youth Corps and one student were killed. In Bauchi Town, CAN Baiuchi confirmed the deaths of three people, including one infant, while the Nigerian Red Cross has confirmed 3500 displaced. Over 20 churches and many houses have been destroyed throughout the state. Bishop Musa Tula told CSW that Christians in Bauchi are "left in the arms of God with no other security."

The violence also targeted Muslim supporters of the PDP. For example, in Zaria, the house of Nigeria's Vice President was reportedly torched, as was the residence of the Chairman of the PDP in Gombe.

CSW's Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, "We offer our condolences to the families and loved ones of those who have died in the violence in Northern Nigeria. It is a tragedy that such senseless violence has broken out after the fairest elections in years, and for the most part, in states that were won by the CPC. These attacks are deplorable and we urge the CPC to reign in its supporters as a matter of urgency. We also ask the federal government to ensure that the security forces to take concerted and immediate action to halt the violence, to protect vulnerable communities, and to enforce existing curfews."

Notes to Editors:

1. Members of the Youth Corps are being targeted because they were employed to monitor the elections, and had resisted efforts at vote rigging.
2. There are currently curfews in Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Kano and Kaduna States.