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## NIGERIA | Boko Haram threatens “bloodiest month yet” for churches

CSW is calling for an increased security presence in five northern and central Nigerian states following a threat by Boko Haram to quadruple attacks on churches this Sunday and make June 2012 “the bloodiest month yet.” This threat follows attacks by gunmen and bombers on churches in northern Nigeria on three consecutive Sundays and an armed raid on the Yobe State capital that occasioned many casualties.

On June 20, a spokesperson from Boko Haram told [Sahara Reporters news agency](#) that the group had around 300 suicide bombers ready to attack churches in predominantly Christian Southern Kaduna and Plateau State. The group claims to have recruited the sons and daughters of Muslims killed during past sectarian conflicts, who have received arms and bomb-making training in Mauritania and Somalia.

Boko Haram also announced plans to attack or take over government buildings in Kano, Kaduna, Yobe and Gombe states, adding that a major attack on the Federal Capital territory (FCT), namely, the capital Abuja, was planned before the end of June as a show of strength to prove that the Nigerian security agencies could not contain them.

Curfews have been used to restore order in Yobe and Kaduna States with varying success. In the Yobe State Capital, Damaturu, a curfew was imposed following a sustained attack by around 100 heavily-armed members of Boko Haram on June 18 that lasted over 24 hours. So far over 50 people are confirmed dead. The curfew was relaxed on Thursday, the same day that Nigerian news agencies reported the arrest in Damaturu of Habibu Bama, suspected master mind of the Christmas Day bombing at St. Theresa’s Catholic Church in Madalla, following a shoot-out with the Joint Task Force.

In Kaduna City, a 24-hour curfew was imposed after reprisal attacks broke out in response to the triple church bombings on June 17. Attempts to relax the curfew on Monday resulted in more violence, as Muslim youths attacked Christian homes and churches in retaliation for the reprisal attacks. Though the 24-hour curfew was reinstated, sporadic outbreaks of violence continued to occur throughout the city, including yesterday morning, and the atmosphere remains tense. The curfew will be relaxed for Muslim prayers today from 12 to 4pm, reinstated on Saturday, and relaxed again for Christian worship on Sunday from 9am to 1pm.

CSW’s Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, “Boko Haram has made its deadly intentions clear and the authorities must respond by stepping up security in targeted areas, both to protect innocent civilians and to defuse any likelihood of reprisal attacks. Once again Boko Haram has articulated its links with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Al Shabaab in Somalia. The security implications of this co-operation go beyond Nigeria’s borders and international co-operation is vital to disrupt the organization’s funders, backers and training network. Unfortunately, the recent decision by the United States to only designate three Boko Haram members as terrorists, as opposed to the entire organization, will not address scope of the problem posed by Boko Haram and will therefore be of limited use in disrupting its networks. Its stated links to international terrorist networks urgently require a far more comprehensive approach, especially since the de-facto state created in part in northern Mali by a group sympathetic to AQIM now raises the possibility of an Afghanistan-style base for Al Qaeda in West Africa.”