



6.26.2012

## NIGERIA Curfew relaxed in Kaduna State after relatively quiet weekend

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The Kaduna State Security Council decided to relax the 24-hour curfew yesterday and the day before, after threats by Boko Haram of coordinated attacks on Sunday church services over the weekend did not take place.

Although no churches were targeted over the weekend, a bomb exploded at Bayan Gari in Bauchi State at around 9pm on June 24. There were no casualties; however nine people were injured in the blast. Another explosion at a popular night spot in Abuja during the early hours of June 23 damaged cars but caused no injuries.

Meanwhile, in Yobe State, members of Boko Haram stormed a prison, freeing 40 inmates. Patrick Egbuniwe, Yobe State Police Commissioner, told Al-Jazeera that two of the attackers were shot dead and some policemen were injured: "They attacked with rifles, the police and the joint task force confronted them and the Boko Haram members that were shot were carried away by the sect."

On June 22, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) condemned the repeated attacks on churches by Boko Haram and warned that acts against civilians, including on such grounds as religion or ethnicity, could amount to crimes against humanity.

Rupert Colville, spokesperson for the OHCHR, said: "We condemn the repeated attacks by Boko Haram on places of worship and on religious freedom, as well as its blatant attempts to stir sectarian tensions and violence between two communities that have lived together peacefully for so long."

"Deliberate acts leading to population 'cleansing' on grounds of religion or ethnicity would also amount to a crime against humanity."

In a statement released on June 19, Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, condemned both the attacks on churches and the reprisal attacks against members of the Muslim community. "The EU will renew its efforts in cooperation with the government and people of Nigeria to address the underlying social and economic problems in the north of the country, and work with the authorities to make the fight against terrorism more effective."

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), said, "CSW commends the OHCHR for drawing attention to what is effectively a campaign of religious cleansing by Boko Haram and for highlighting the fact that the deliberate targeting of churches could amount to a crime against humanity. It is also heartening to hear that no churches were targeted over the last weekend and that the authorities felt able to relax the curfew in Kaduna. However, there is a need for sustained peace and for an end to the appalling attacks that sparked off reprisals and led to the state of emergency. We therefore urge full co-operation between the Nigerian government and the international community to uncover Boko Haram's funders, agents and backers and thereby bring an end to the terrorism that threatens the unity of this multi ethnic and religiously diverse nation."