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NIGERIA | At Least 160 Dead In Terrorist Related Violence

At least 160 people have died in terrorist related violence this week in Nigeria's Yobe and Borno States.

On the evening of Sept. 18, Boko Haram members armed with Kalashnikovs, rocket launchers and homemade bombs reportedly stormed Yadi Buni Town in Yobe State, setting fire to a makeshift police station, telecommunications masts, parts of the local government headquarters and the home of the divisional police head, whose wife was burnt to death inside the building. The son of the Yobe Peoples Democratic Party's youth leader was reportedly killed, while one soldier and nine sect members died in an ensuing shootout.

On Sept. 17, 143 commuters were killed and several abducted when well-armed Boko Haram gunmen in military fatigues and bullet-proof vests ambushed vehicles along the busy Maiduguri to Damaturu Express Way. Travelers were reportedly asked to produce their ID cards, then were lined up and shot. According to one survivor, people from the Borno State capital, Maiduguri, were singled out for execution.

The gunmen went on to overrun Benisheik Town, 46 miles west of Maiduguri, killing around 14 people and torching over 100 homes, businesses and vehicles. According to one report, most of the dead were members or otherwise associated with the Civilian Joint Task Force and were beheaded. Three policemen and two soldiers were also reported to have died in the violence. This was the second assault on Benisheik in 10 days; five sect members and 13 civilian vigilantes lost their lives in earlier violence.

Reprisal attacks by Boko Haram on vigilantes, their families and communities are becoming more regular, and are increasingly taking the form of collective punishments. At least 50, of over 160 people murdered by the sect in August, were vigilantes.

Also on Sept. 17, army authorities disclosed that 15 soldiers and a lieutenant had been killed by Boko Haram along the Baga-Maiduguri Road in Borno State, although this figure has been

disputed by anonymous local defense sources who claim at least 40 soldiers were killed and 65 others are missing following an ambush. The army also stated that 150 sect members were killed by troops over the previous weekend in a battle in Kafiya Forest in Borno that claimed the life of key Boko Haram commander Abba Goroma.

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, said, "We send our heartfelt condolences to those who lost loved ones in this week's violence. The rise in reprisal attacks on entire communities is deeply worrying, and is clearly designed to terrify people into ending all cooperation with the security forces. Having incorporated the Civilian JTF into their system, the security services also have an obligation to ensure the protection of its members. Ultimately, vigilante groups cannot match a well-armed, well-resourced insurgency. It is, therefore, vital that the Federal Government allocates sufficient troops to these states to address this issue. The government must also disrupt Boko Haram's sources of funding as a matter of urgency, and will need the assistance of neighboring states and the rest of the international community in order to do so effectively."