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NIGERIA | College Students Killed in Boko Haram Attack

At least 40 students were killed when suspected members of the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram, attacked the Federal Government College Buni-Yadi in Yobe State, northeast Nigeria, during the early hours of Feb. 25.

The co-educational college is located around 37 miles south of the Yobe State capital, Damaturu. Eyewitnesses informed local media that sect members separated male students, killing some with machetes and shooting others. They subsequently set fire to buildings including hostels, the college administrative block and staff quarters, burning them to the ground with people inside. According to unconfirmed reports, the death toll may include members of staff, and some female students may have been abducted.

The gunmen also reportedly set fire to other government and private establishments and destroyed telecommunication masts.

Yobe is one of three northeastern states in Nigeria that have been under emergency rule since May last year, and the assault on the college is the fourth on an educational establishment in the state since the insurgency began. The murders follow the release of a video purporting to show the sect's leader, Abubakar Shekau, claiming responsibility for the killing in Zaria of Salafi cleric Sheikh Albani, and threatening to target "those who pursue Western education." In the video, Shekau also threatened former presidents Muhammadu Buhari and Ibrahim Babangida, the Shehu of Borno and the Emir of Kano, and oil refineries in the Niger Delta.

The killings came hours after the broadcast of President Goodluck Jonathan's sixth Presidential Media Chat, in which he said his government is working towards a lasting solution to the Boko Haram issue and had scored several successes against the sect.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We extend our heartfelt condolences to the families of those who were killed in this appalling attack, for which there can be no justification, religious or otherwise. Where weaknesses remain in the security arrangements, they must be addressed as a matter of urgency. Every effort must be made to ensure that Boko Haram is no longer able to circumvent security and that the perpetrators of this and other egregious human rights violations account for the innocent lives they have taken."