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NIGERIA | Boko Haram Kills Hundreds in Several Villages

Boko Haram's violent campaign in the northeast of Nigeria left hundreds dead in Baga and at least 15 villages in Borno State and increased the vulnerability of the state capital of Maiduguri.

On Jan. 3, Boko Haram insurgents stormed the town of Baga killing hundreds, forcing around 20,000 people to flee, and overrunning the headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force comprising of troops from Nigeria, Niger and Chad. Reports indicate that troops from Chad and Niger withdrew from the camp prior to the attack, leaving the Nigerian army and civilian vigilantes to defend the town.

The assault on Baga and its environs continued until Jan. 7, while the Civilian Joint Task Force and the Nigerian army attempted to regain the town. According to some estimates, 2,000 people may have died as the insurgents razed Baga and at least 15 other villages to the ground. Several eyewitnesses put the death toll in the hundreds, while a statement issued on Jan. 13 by the Nigerian Army, which sent surveillance aircraft to the area, confirmed 150 deaths "in the interim." The statement also reiterated the army's earlier assurances that "the military has not given up on Baga or any part of the country," adding that "appropriate plans, men and resources are presently being mobilized to address the situation."

The Boko Haram assault on Baga and its environs appears to have been aimed primarily at the Civilian JTF and has left the Borno State capital Maiduguri, a key target for Boko Haram, increasingly vulnerable. On Jan. 10, a suicide bomb attack, in which explosives were strapped to a 10-year-old girl, killed at least 16 people and injured over 20 people. The sect is also targeting Yobe State. On Jan. 9, two heavy attacks on the state capital, Damaturu, were beaten back by the army. On Jan. 11, at least 15 people died when a market in Potiskum was targeted by two young female suicide bombers. A day earlier, two people died in an explosion at Potiskum's Divisional Police Station.

In a series of high-profile media interviews, Ignatius Kaigama, the Catholic Archbishop of Jos and president of the Nigerian Bishops Conference, urged Europe and America to offer more support to the Nigerian government to combat the terrorist threat posed by Boko Haram. Meanwhile, the Prelate of the Methodist Church of Nigeria, Archbishop Samuel Uche, claimed 95% of the insurgents were of Kanuri or Fulani ethnicity and that elements within the Nigerian armed forces and political elites are undermining the fight against terrorism.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We extend our heartfelt condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives in this latest series of terrorist attacks in Borno and Yobe. Particularly despicable is Boko Haram's continuing use of vulnerable girls as disposable

commodities to fulfill its murderous purposes. While Europe and America stand together in mourning recent events in Paris and assisting efforts against ISIL, we must also extend our solidarity and assistance to the people of Nigeria, who have lost so many over the years to the nihilistic violence of Boko Haram, and offer effective assistance to the Nigerian government, in order to bring these daily assaults on innocent civilians to an end.”