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## **NIGERIA | Attacks Claim at Least 80 Lives**

A church, restaurant and mosque were targeted in attacks by Boko Haram in Yobe and Plateau States on July 5.

Six people died when a suicide bomber detonated a device at the Redeemed Christian Church of God building in the Jigawa suburb of Potiskum, Yobe State, just as the congregation was entering the building for the Sunday service. Five died at the scene, including the pastor, a parishioner and her two children, while another died at the hospital.

In Plateau State, on the same day, a suicide bomber detonated a device in a crowded restaurant in an area close to the University of Jos around 10 p.m. A second attack targeted Muslim cleric Yahya Jingir, a critic of Boko Haram, as he delivered a Ramadan sermon at the Yantaya Mosque near the Terminus area. Some witnesses report that five gunmen stormed the premises shooting worshippers at random before a suicide bomber detonated his device, while others claim the assailants launched a rocket propelled grenade.

Given Plateau State's history of religious crises, the attack on Yantaya mosque may also have been an attempt to reignite old hostilities. Christian Solidarity Worldwide's (CSW) sources report that following the blast, some angry worshippers burnt down St. Michael's African Church near Ahmadu Bello Way and damaged vehicles. They also attempted to vandalize Christian businesses and attack the Evangelical Church Winning All Good News building before being stopped by the security services.

According to official casualty figures, 44 people died and 47 were injured in the Jos bombings. Some local sources claim the figure is higher, having confirmed around 70 deaths, including women, children and the elderly. Also on July 5, gunmen stormed Kokeya and Chigama villages in Zamfara State, killing at least 30 people, setting homes ablaze and stealing livestock.

Over 750 people have been murdered in a marked upsurge in attacks by Boko Haram since President Buhari's inauguration May 29. A local source described the upsurge as an attempt by the sect to prove it is not intimidated by the advent of a president who was formally a military general, and who, during his election campaign, vowed to end the insurgency within three months. Boko Haram, which now terms itself the West African Province of the "Islamic State," has particularly targeted Maiduguri following the presidential announcement that the military command center would be relocated there. The upsurge is also thought to be the sect's response to a call by Daesh (IS) spokesman Abu Mohammed al-Adnani to "make Ramadan a month of disasters for the infidels."

Sunday's attacks capped off a week marred by terrorist atrocities believed to have claimed over 200 lives, mostly in Borno State. On June 30, 48 men were shot dead shortly after breaking their Ramadan fasts in two villages near the town of Monguno. A young female suicide bomber also killed 12 worshippers when she blew herself up in a mosque in Malari village.

On June 3, over 50 gunmen are reported to have attacked the village of Kukawa, near Lake Chad, killing 98. An eyewitness informed the Nigerian media that, while some of the terrorists waited and set most of the corpses on fire, others dragged women from their homes and shot them. On the same day, 11 people were killed in two separate suicide attacks, one by a female suicide bomber at the roadside near Malari village along the Bama/Konduga Highway and the other along the Allau Dam Road in Konduga. The sect was also reported to have pursued and executed 11 of its members in front of terrified inhabitants of Miringa village in Biu Local Government Area. The men, who are thought to have been forcibly conscripted, had fled from a terrorist camp and were waiting to surrender to the Nigerian Army.

Also June 3, sect members attacked Mussa village, close to the state capital, Maiduguri, killing 31 people. During fighting in Zabarmari village near Maiduguri, six female suicide bombers exploded their devices among fleeing villagers, occasioning many casualties. Later, a large Boko Haram contingent attempted to gain access to Maiduguri itself but was beaten back by the military and reportedly suffered heavy losses.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "Our thoughts and prayers are with those who have lost loved ones, homes and livelihoods as a result of these atrocities. Once again, Boko Haram has illustrated its utter disregard for every religious creed, including the one it purports to be upholding, and for the sanctity of human life. The upsurge in terrorist violence is particularly alarming, as it comes after the army was making progress and reclaiming ground and suggests the terrorists may have taken advantage of the interregnum to regroup. We urge the Federal Government to adjust its strategies in the north east to ensure protection for vulnerable villages and to safeguard civilians in states where military checkpoints have been removed. Nigerians must regroup and unite in the national interest to overcome this murderous sect, which continues to pose an existential threat to the nation."