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NIGERIA | At Least 64 Dead in Terrorist Attack

At least 64 people died and an estimated 70 were injured when two female suicide bombers targeted an open air prayer ground in the capital of Yobe State in northeast Nigeria as worshippers gathered to mark the end of the Ramadan fast.

A Nigerian army spokesman informed local media that the blasts occurred at around 7:40 a.m. in the Gwange area of Damaturu, when an elderly woman and a girl detonated devices at screening areas as people were being searched before entering the prayer ground.

Meanwhile, on July 16, 50 people were killed and 58 injured in two explosions in a market in Gombe City, Gombe State. One was caused by a female suicide bomber. The other device was planted in the market. The latest bombings have fueled debate on the merits of banning the hijab in Nigeria, as has occurred in Chad and northern Cameroon, following suicide bombings in those countries. The country's foremost Islamic organization, Jama'atu Nasril Islam, has expressed opposition to a ban.

While attacks by a resurgent Boko Haram have claimed at least 800 lives in northern Nigeria since President Buhari's inauguration on May 29, violence involving armed Fulani herdsmen has claimed around 500 lives in central Nigeria within a similar period but continues to be overshadowed by the spike in Boko Haram's activities.

During a meeting with the Plateau State Police Commissioner on July 14, a delegation consisting of the North Central Leadership of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and several Church leaders revealed that, in the last two months, over 264 people were killed and many others displaced by armed attacks on communities in Riyom in Barkin Ladi Local Government Area.

Elsewhere, 5,000 members of the Tiv tribe protested outside government house in the capital of Taraba State on July 15, carrying the mutilated bodies of two victims of the latest attack by Fulani gunmen. On June 29, Nigerian media sources reported that fighting between Fulanis and Agatu tribesmen in Kogi State resulted in the loss of over 80 lives. On June 26, a police spokesperson reported that at least 96 people died in Benue State after several villages were attacked by armed Fulani herdsmen.

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, said, "Our thoughts and prayers are with those who lost loved ones in these senseless and appalling attacks. The statistics from northern and central Nigeria are sobering. The threat posed to innocent civilians by the Fulani gunmen must not be overshadowed by the violence wrought by Boko Haram. A holistic security strategy that counters both threats and secures justice for victims must be developed in order to prevent the death toll from rising further."

