

## **Will Nigeria violence spiral out of control?**

**By Al Jazeera**

**22 June 2012**

Security forces have begun patrolling Nigeria's northern cities after a recent series of attacks killed at least 100 people.

The latest wave of violence started after three churches were bombed on Sunday in Kaduna, a city which lies on the border between the Muslim north and the mostly Christian south.

Boko Haram, the armed group that is opposed to Western ideology and which wants to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria, claimed responsibility for Sunday's suicide attacks.

The northern city is now under curfew, with people complaining about being trapped in their homes while the violence continues.

On Monday fighting in the northeastern city of Damaturu prompted the Nigerian government to impose a curfew in the city, with soldiers and police deployed to maintain order.

The latest incident is one in a line of violent attacks that goes back to 2009, and which some say has seen over a 1,000 people killed by Boko Haram fighters.

Although the group says it is trying to wipe out Western influence in Nigeria, the attacks have a distinctly sectarian hue.

Goodluck Jonathan, the Nigerian president, has often been criticised for his handling of the violence related to the armed group, with opposition groups blaming him for failing to keep the country secure.

In December last year Jonathan said this about the armed group: "We're all aware of the security challenges which the activities of the Boko Haram sect have foisted on the country. What began as sectarian crisis in the northeastern parts of the country has gradually evolved into terrorist activities in different parts of the country. All Nigerians will collectively fight this terror, we will crush them."

Inside Story asks: How much of a threat does Boko Haram pose to Africa's most populous country? Who is backing the group's campaign of violence? And how can the Nigerian leadership stop it?

Joining presenter Ghida Fakhry to discuss these issues are guests: William Okoye, the director of national issues for the Christian Association of Nigeria, which is a national umbrella organisation, and a pastor to two former Nigerian presidents; Alhaji Garba Sani, a member of the Nigerian Muslim Forum UK and the former head of the Foundation for Good Governance and Development in Nigeria; and Buba Misawa, a political science professor at Washington and Jefferson College, and an author on Nigerian foreign policy and West Africa.

"The government hasn't, over the years, been able to arrest and prosecute and clearly deal with people and groups that are perpetrating these atrocities, either on the side of the Boko Haram or on the side of Muslims or Christians who have taken [up] arms in retaliation."

Alhaji Garba Sani, the Nigerian Muslim Forum, UK

### **BOKO HARAM VIOLENCE:**

- It was formed in 2002 but carried out its first attack in 2009, killing hundreds in a series of attacks on police stations in Maiduguri.
- Nigerian security forces captured Boko Haram leader Mohammed Yusuf the same year. He later died in police custody.

- By 2010, Boko Haram had regrouped under a new leader, and carried out a deadly attack in Jos on New Year's eve, killing 80 people.
- Similar attacks continued throughout 2011, culminating in coordinated bomb and gun attacks in November that killed around 150 people. The violence continued unabated, and on Christmas day a bomb attack on a church near the Nigerian capital, Abuja, killed 42 worshippers.

#### WHO ARE THE BOKO HARAM:

The name literally means 'Western education is a sin'. The radical armed group based in Nigeria rejects Western culture and political model. Its stated goal is to wipe out any Western influence in northern Nigeria and create an Islamic state there. Though recent attacks involved bombings, the group's trademark has been to use gunmen on motorcycles, to kill police, politicians and critics.

Copyright 2012 Al Jazeera