

## **Is Nigeria's conflict religious or political?**

**By Al Jazeera**

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For the last decade, Plateau state in central Nigeria has been a hotbed of ethnic tension between the Fulani, who are traditionally Muslim, and the Berom, who are Christian. The Fulani are seen as 'settlers' by the state's indigenous Berom.

Last month, more than 100 people were killed in violent clashes between the two communities.

Nigerian police blamed the most recent violence on tribal differences over land but a radical Islamist group, Boko Haram, claimed responsibility for the attacks. They killed 63 Christian parishioners taking refuge in a preacher's house.

And on Tuesday, thousands of villagers were evacuated from their homes amid fears of more violence.

A military operation is underway in Plateau state to find the perpetrators. But the state's governor, Jonah David Jang, is not convinced that the military can bring peace.

He told Al Jazeera: "The military service is becoming polluted. They are becoming part of the problem instead of solving the problem because some of them, as we've found out, do take sides .... The security forces generally have to sort out themselves to be able to maintain peace, law and order in Nigeria."

On this episode of Inside Story we ask: How dangerous is the religious and political divide in Nigeria? And what is the solution to this ongoing conflict?

Joining the discussion, with presenter Nick Clark, are guests: Darren Kew, an associate professor of Conflict Resolution at the University of Massachusetts and the author of an upcoming book Democracy, Conflict Resolution and Civil Society in Nigeria; Michael Amoah, an Africa analyst and author of Reconstructing the Nation in Africa; and Isaac Olawale Albert, a professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Ibadan, and the director of the Institute of African Studies.

"It is true that the Berom are predominantly non-Muslim, it doesn't make them predominantly Christian ... to make them a target group, they have to be considered as Christian and attacked for economic reasons. [That] is something that the reportage needs to clarify."

Michael Amoah, an Africa analyst

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