

INTERNATIONAL

Christian tribe violence in Nigeria said to leave 80 Dead

YELWA, Nigeria - Thousands of Muslim residents fled this central Nigerian town Wednesday following an attack by gunmen from a largely Christian tribe in which police said at least 80 people died.

Local residents gave a much higher toll. They showed an Associated Press reporter a 160-square-foot area of freshly upturned soil, saying it was the burial site for 280 people killed in Sunday's attack by ethnic Tarok militants.

It was not immediately possible to independently verify their claim.

The killings are part of a cycle of conflict that has rocked Nigeria's central region since an outburst of Muslim-Christian violence in September 2001 pitted Christians against Muslims in the once-peaceful city of Jos. Over 1,000 people died in one week then. Many more have been killed since, including hundreds since January this year.

Although police deployed reinforcements to Yelwa, a second round of fighting Tuesday left an unknown number killed, town councilor Yakubu Haruna claimed.

"So many dead bodies,"

"So many dead bodies," in the two attacks, I cannot say how many."

— Yakubu Haruna, Town Councilor

in the two attacks, Haruna said. "I cannot say how many."

On Wednesday, one badly burned corpse was still visible on an otherwise deserted street.

Few parts of this town of cattle herdsman and seminomadic traders were left untouched by the assailants who used jerry cans of kerosene to burn several mosques and hundreds, possibly thousands of homes and vehicles.

At the grave site, Waziri Lawal, a 37-year-old farmer hefted the pick and wheelbarrow he said he used to bury friends and neighbors.

Sanusi Yusuf, a 40-year-old cattle dealer, told of seeing his brother shot dead as the two ran from attackers who surrounded the town during the first attack Sunday. Attackers used rifles, shotguns and colonial-era muskets to shoot at anyone who ventured onto the street, he said.

"I ran to the north, but

there was no way. I ran the other way, no way. Then I saw my brother fall down. God is great," Yusuf said.

Thousands of residents fled carrying whatever few personal belongings they could. Thousands more were huddling together Wednesday, waiting to be evacuated in government trucks taking them to relative safety of the regional cities of Bauchi and Lafia.

Among those who left Wednesday were scores of men, women and children with machete and gunshot wounds.

"There is no God except Allah," whispered Fatu Samaila, a 48-year-old resident, nursing her badly swollen arm hit Sunday by a bullet that passed straight through, killing her baby boy Kasimu Bellu.

Although motives were unclear, the attack happened a week after Muslims reportedly launched an assault on the Tarok village of Kawo,



CIVIC CHAMP CODDLED

AIDS activist Yinka Jegede-Ekpe, right, is presented with a 2004 Reebok Human Rights Award in New York on Wednesday. Actress Gloria Reuben, left, handles the honors. Jegede-Ekpe received the award for fighting AIDS, which affects millions of people in her home country of Nigeria. Most of those afflicted are too poor to buy the drugs that would keep them alive.

Nigerian protestors force plant's closure

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Protesters from a Niger Delta village have forced Shell to close a major oil-pumping facility and have demanded the firm keep its promise to rebuild a road that links their village to the outside world, residents said recently.

More than 200 protestors from Opherin village besieged Shell's station near Erhiemu, recently, to protest their poverty despite living in an oil-rich area.

The facility has the capacity to pump 100,000 barrels daily from 24 oil wells.

Eyewitnesses said the protest had forced it to shut down.

"We don't have anything to show for our status as the leading oil-producing community in the delta," community leader Peter Onovaye, told reporters.

The unarmed protestors, including men, women and children, set up camp inside the facility located 25 miles north of Warri, a key operations base for oil companies in the Niger Delta.

Onovaye said the protestors would remain at the facility until Shell gave the community a pledge to rebuild the road, which he described as their only link with the rest of Nigeria and vital for moving agricultural produce out of the village, which is a farming community.

He said the villagers had resorted to protest action after Shell failed to respond favorably to a 90-day ultimatum to repair the road.

Malawi opposition takes TV channels to court

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The opposition National Democratic Alliance has taken legal action against the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation and Television Malawi for allegedly biased coverage of election campaigning.

NDA attorney Ralph Kasambara said his client was seeking redress for the alleged Blackout of opposition parties by the public broad-

casters in the run up to the May 18 poll.

"I am only hoping that the court will direct the two public media institutions to comply with the Parliamentary and Presidential Act (on free and fair elections)," said Kasambara. The NDA is also asking the courts to rule that all competing parties have fair access to public broadcasters in Malawi, which is in south

east Africa.

NDA spokesperson Salule Masangwi said the party had resorted to court action, as "the ruling party has an advantage over us because of (coverage by) the two media houses."

The court is to hear the NDA's application this week.

Meanwhile, Malawi's outgoing President Bakili Muluzi has threatened to deport European Union election observers if they try to campaign against his United Democratic Front (UDF) party.

Muzuli has served two

terms and is due to step down after the presidential and parliamentary elections on May 18. This is Malawi's third multiparty election since 1994, when long-time dictator Hastings Kamuzu Banda lost the presidency to Muzuli in a poll he was forced to hold.

Banda had become president in 1966 and five years later made himself president for life, jailing opponents.

In this May's election, five candidates will stand. The opinion polls show that the favorite is the UDF's Bingu wa Mutharika.

Abuse

(Continued from Page 4)

Senate Armed Services Committee, said lawmakers should open a separate inquiry.

"The first investigation, though, has to be prompt, thorough and tough by the Army, because these are despicable practices which just fuel the hatred and the wrath of those who oppose us," he said on CNN.

The photos added to a wave of other bad news that polls show is increasing public doubt about Iraq and Bush's handling of the war.

On Sunday, seven U.S. soldiers were killed and dozens wounded in two attacks in northern and western Iraq.

Bush has promised that the U.S. military will not "cut and run" in Iraq. But throngs of Iraqis celebrated what they saw as a victory in Fallujah over the weekend when U.S. Marines backed off their threatening posture around the city.

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