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'200 dead' in Kaduna riots



Riots in February claimed more than 1,000 lives

Extra soldiers and police have been drafted in to the northern Nigerian city of Kaduna, after two days of clashes between Muslims and Christians.

More than 200 people have died and hundreds of buildings have been burned down, according to reports.

The city centre is reported to be calm now, but in poorer neighbourhoods, witnesses talk of mosques and churches burnt down and corpses on the streets.

The violence came just three months after riots in the city - in which more than 1,000 people died - over plans to implement Islamic law, or sharia, in some northern Nigerian states that are divided between Muslims and Christians.

Although authorities have been at pains to play down a religious motive this time, residents said the gangs were clearly organised on Christian-Muslim lines.

Authorities have imposed a night-time curfew which they said would be strictly enforced and would apply until further notice.

Politician killed

The French news agency AFP reported that police had been

“ Anybody found with illegal firearms will not only face prosecution but will be treated as an armed robber ”

Kaduna State Police Commissioner Mohammed Shehu

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Holy conflict

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ordered not to reveal the full death toll for fear of sparking revenge killings.

But hospital sources told Reuters more than 200 had died.

"About 50 bodies were brought here alone and many more deposited at the general hospital," said a member of staff at an army hospital in Kaduna.

Among the dead was a member of the House of Representatives, Ibrahim Abdullahi.

He was reported to have been killed on Tuesday afternoon by rioters who mounted a roadblock on the Kaduna-Abuja expressway.

Police say the latest clashes broke out on Monday after residents of a mainly Christian neighbourhood blamed Muslims for the killing of a local man.

Fighting was reported to have spread to the outlying districts of Nasarawa and Bagiko on Tuesday night.

Menacing gangs

Thousands of people have sought refuge in police and military barracks.

The authorities are concerned about the risk of violence spreading to other parts of Nigeria.

In February, the killings in Kaduna were followed by reprisal killings in the south-eastern city of Aba, where the native Ibo people, who are overwhelmingly Christian, attacked the Muslim minority.

This time around, Aba is again extremely tense.

Segregated city

Christian and Muslim leaders have put out a joint statement appealing for calm, and blaming the clashes on irresponsible youths.

Since February, Kaduna has become an increasingly segregated city. The mixed neighbourhoods, where Christians and Muslims



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used to live together in harmony, are gradually disappearing.

Thousands of Christian Ibos have already returned to their native south-eastern Nigeria, despite repeated appeals from the authorities for them to stay.

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