



## **Nigeria: Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 8 June 2010**

### **Information on recent ethno-religious rioting in Plateau State in March 2010.**

The annual report on Nigeria published by the *US Commission on International Religious Freedom*, in a section titled “The Recurrent Sectarian Violence in Jos”, states:

“Most recently, in January and March 2010, the city of Jos and several surrounding villages in Plateau State experienced horrific sectarian clashes with close to 1,000 people killed. Religion became a driving force in the violence, although it is unclear whether religion was the precipitating or a proxy issue to the violence. In January 2010, more than 300 people were killed and thousands displaced in sectarian violence in Jos. Many of those killed reportedly were from the predominantly Muslim Hausa-Fulani community, with the attackers coming from the predominantly Christian Berom tribe. Although many Christian representatives contest this account, most Muslim representatives the USCIRF delegation met with in March 2010 believe it to be true. This difference in perception is part of the dynamic that exists between the communities and cannot be ignored.” (US Commission on International Religious Freedom (29 April 2010) *Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2010: Nigeria*)

This report refers to events of March 2010 as follows:

“In March 2010, in a so-called ricochet attack against the Christian Berom villages of Dogo-Nahawa, Zot, and Rassat, approximately 500 people were killed, including many women and children, and thousands displaced. According a March 2010 New York Times interview with detained perpetrators, as well as USCIRF's interlocutors in Abuja in March 2010, the perpetrators were from the predominantly Muslim Hausa-Fulani community and were carrying out reprisal attacks for the January 2010 violence. Several hundred people had been killed by the time the Nigerian police and army responded. The Nigerian military surrounded the city of Jos and nearby areas and imposed a dawn to dusk curfew, which continued at the end of the reporting period. Despite these measures, approximately twelve people were killed outside Jos in the predominantly Christian, ethnic Berom village of Byei less than a week after the initial attacks. As of this writing, no additional large-scale incidents have occurred, but news accounts indicate that individual reprisal murders are continuing, such as when a person enters a neighborhood and is identified as being of a different religious background.” (ibid)

A *UN News Service* report states:

“As many as 500 people in the area around the city of Jos may have been killed last weekend during the latest wave of clashes between Christians and Muslims, which followed similar attacks in January and in November 2009.” (UN News Service (9 March 2010) *Nigeria: UN Rights Chief Calls for New Approach to End Cycle of Violence in Country*)

A *Christian Science Monitor* article states:

“The central city of Jos is on high alert after Sunday's violence in Nigeria in which a late-night attack by herdsmen killed up to 500 people from nearby farming villages. The attack has been seen as a reprisal for attacks in January, in which about 300 herdsmen were killed by youths from the farming community. The town of Jos is all too often a focal point for competition over the use of arable land in central and northern Nigeria, where climate change has dried up pasture lands and forced animal herders closer and closer to farming communities, where their herds can destroy crops. Jos is also right on the de facto fault line separating Nigeria's mainly Muslim north from its mainly Christian south. The farming community in Jos is primarily Christian of the Berom ethnic group, while the herders are ethnic Fulanis who practice Islam.” (Christian Science Monitor (8 March 2010) *Nigeria violence: Muslim-Christian clashes kill hundreds*)

A *BBC News* report states:

“At least 100 people have been reported killed in suspected religious clashes near the central Nigerian city of Jos. Witnesses said several villages just outside of the city were attacked simultaneously overnight. Acting President Goodluck Jonathan has put security forces in central Nigeria on full alert. In January hundreds of people were killed in riots in Jos, which lies between the mainly Muslim north and the more Christian south.” (BBC News (7 March 2010) *'Scores killed' in Nigeria riots*)

A *Daily Trust* article states:

“At least 200 people were killed yesterday when suspected pastoralists attacked three villages near Jos, where sectarian violence left hundreds dead in January, villagers and officials said. Witnesses said armed persons stormed the Berom villages of Dogo Nahawa, Ramsat and Kamang, in Shen district of Jos South Local Government Area, at about 3.00 am, shooting in the air, thereby creating pandemonium as villagers scamper for cover. People who came out of their homes were bludgeoned or macheted to death. The villages are 10 kilometres south of Jos city, and about five minutes' drive to the country home of Governor Jonah Jang. Our reporter saw corpses-- including those of women and children - with cudgel and machete wounds strewn along the streets. Many houses in the villages were also razed. Witnesses said they were suspecting the invaders to be Fulani pastoralists because they were heard speaking in Fulfulde as they attack the villagers.” (Daily Trust (8 March 2010) *Nigeria: 200 Killed in Jos Villages Raid*)

A report from *The Guardian* states:

“Attackers wielding machetes killed hundreds of people as further religious violence hit Nigeria yesterday following pre-dawn clashes between Islamist pastoralists and Christian villagers. Bodies were reportedly piled in streets near the central city of Jos and Gregory Yenlong, a Plateau state official, said the death toll could be more than 500. ‘Soldiers are patrolling and everywhere remains calm ... we are estimating 500 people killed but I think it should be a little bit above that,’ he added. A police spokesman said the number of dead officially recorded so far stood at 55. Some people were apparently burned to death and many others displaced as homes were razed to the ground. Local aid agencies described the violence as a ‘reprisal’ for sectarian clashes in January in which 300 people, most of them Muslims, died and Jos was put under military curfew.” (The Guardian (8 March 2010) *Hundreds dead as more religious violence hits Nigeria*)

A *New York Times* article states:

“Officials and human rights groups in Nigeria sharply increased the count of the dead after a weekend of vicious ethnic violence, saying Monday that as many as 500 people — many of them women and children — may have been killed near the city of Jos, long a center of tensions between Christians and Muslims. The dead were Christians and members of an ethnic group that had been feuding with the Hausa-Fulani, Muslim herders whom witnesses and police officials identified as the attackers. Officials said the attack was in reprisal for violence in January, when dozens of Muslims were slaughtered in and around Jos, including more than 150 in one village. Early Sunday, the attackers set upon the villagers with machetes, killing women and children in their homes and ensnaring the men who tried to flee in fishnets and animal traps, then massacring them, according to a Nigerian rights group whose investigators went to the area. Some homes were set on fire.” (New York Times (8 March 2010) *Toll From Religious and Ethnic Violence in Nigeria Rises to 500*)

See also *New York Times* article which states:

“Estimates by officials and human rights groups of the number of dead have ranged from 300 to more than 500 in the attack here and in two nearby villages, Zot and Ratsat. The people here spoke of a well-organized gang of dozens who stealthily surrounded the village before dawn. They had come on foot from the low hills surrounding this rocky plateau, Muslim herdsman apparently bent on revenge for similar killings in January and angry over what one rights group said were cases of cattle rustling. They crept around the stand of tall cactus that screens the village of about 2,000. Gunmen fired shots in the air, to panic the residents and flush them from their homes. ‘I heard a powerful gunshot, then sporadic shots from all angles,’ recalled Isaac Pam, a civil servant who lives here. ‘The village had been surrounded. And the firing was coming closer.’ A separate corps — men with machetes, or ‘cutlasses’ as some villagers described them — began their work. ‘I saw them with very long, white swords,’ Mr. Pam said. ‘Some were dressed in black, and some in camouflage.’ The men were ruthlessly efficient, and in halting sentences the villagers described the carnage that followed. ‘They killed my daughter and my son,’ Ezekiel Chwang said. ‘It was

Sunday night. They surrounded our house. They were shouting.’ He climbed into a tree to escape the marauders, and dropped back down after they had left, to find a horrific scene in his home. The men, he said, had discovered his 6-year-old daughter and 4-year-old son sleeping in the bedroom. They slit their necks with a machete, then set them on fire.” (New York Times (9 March 2010)  
*Ravaged Nigerian Village Is Haunted by Latest Massacre*)

A *Human Rights Watch* news report states:

“Witnesses interviewed by Human Rights Watch said the attacks were committed by Muslim men speaking Hausa and Fulani against Christians, mostly of the Berom ethnicity. Civil society leaders in Jos said that the attacks appeared to be in retaliation for previous attacks against Muslim communities in the area and the theft of cattle from Fulani herdsman. On January 19, more than 150 Muslim residents were killed in an attack on the nearby town of Kuru Karama. The witnesses said that groups of armed men attacked the largely Christian village of Dogo Nahawa at around 3 a.m. After surrounding the town, they hunted down and attacked Christian residents, killing many as they tried to flee and burning many others alive. The witnesses said they believed some of the attackers had previously lived in their villages before fleeing during inter-communal tension in 2001, 2008, and earlier in 2010. Witnesses to the killings, community leaders from Jos, and journalists who visited the villages told Human Rights Watch that they saw bodies, including corpses of young children and babies, inside houses, strewn around the streets, and in the pathways leading out of the villages. A Christian leader who participated today in a mass burial of 67 bodies in Dogo Nahawa said that about 375 people are dead or still missing. Journalists and community leaders who visited the town said that many homes, cars, and other property were burned and destroyed.” (Human Rights Watch (8 March 2010)  
*Nigeria: Investigate Massacre, Step Up Patrols*)

A *Reuters AlertNet* report of an attack on the village of Byei states:

“Raiders armed with machetes killed at least 13 people in an attack on a village near the central Nigeria city of Jos on Wednesday, close to where hundreds have died in sectarian violence this year. A Reuters witness in the village of Byei, in the Riyom area around 30 km (20 miles) south of Jos, counted 13 bodies, most of them women, following what residents said an attack in the early hours. At least three huts were also burned in the raid. The attack happened despite a dusk-to-dawn curfew in Plateau State which has been enforced by the military since January, when clashes between Muslim and Christian mobs killed more than 400 people, according to community leaders.” (Reuters AlertNet (17 March 2010) *Machete attack on Nigeria village kills at least 13*)

See also *Christian Solidarity Worldwide* report on this incident which states:

“Twelve people from Byei village, Jos South were brutally murdered in an attack by Fulani Muslims last night, just over a week after around 500 Christians were massacred with machetes by a similar group of attackers. Most of the victims were attacked in their beds. The dead include two men, four children and six women, two of whom were pregnant. One woman and her son had their tongues

cut out, while another was burnt alive in her home along with her two young children. Four further victims were hospitalised, two with gunshot wounds allegedly from AK 47s, and the others with machete wounds.” (Christian Solidarity Worldwide (17 March 2010) *Nigeria - Fulani muslims murder 12 villagers*)

In a paragraph headed “Targeted killings of ethnic individuals” a *Christian Science Monitor* article refers to the situation in Plateau State since March 2010 as follows:

“Secret killings have been on the rise since this year's second massacre, in early March, say Christian and Muslim community leaders, government officials, and police. 'We have started receiving reports of corpses being found here and there. It started happening after the March 7 incident,' says Femi Oyeleye, the head of the state's criminal investigation department, referring to coordinated mob attacks by Muslims on members of the mainly Christian Berom ethnic group. Those March killings are said to have been reprisals for religious clashes that killed scores in January. According to Mr. Oyeleye, 25 corpses unrelated to any major attacks were found in Jos during March and April – far above the average rate of three corpses a month during the 12 months leading up to February. Lawal Ishaq, a local lawyer who documents secret killings against Muslims, recorded 36 deaths in March and April. Death tolls are sensitive in Jos – and highly unreliable. The figures for the March massacre, in which mostly Christians were killed, range from 150 to 450. Similar uncertainty shrouds the January massacre, in which mostly Muslims died. 'Each side inflates the figures, and then the high numbers are used to justify revenge attacks,' says Henry Mang, a researcher at Jos University's Centre for Conflict Management and Peace Studies.” (Christian Science Monitor (25 May 2005) *Quietly, the Christian-Muslim killing continues in Nigeria*)

We hope this information is of use to you. If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database

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