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IBPP Research Associates: Nigeria

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---From The Post-Express-Wired in Lagos, Nigeria at <http://www.postexpresswired.com> and written by Philip Nwosu, Lagos, and Bassey Inyang, Kano.

Despite pleas for calm to the warring factions in the religious skirmishes in Kaduna, heavy fighting between Christians and Moslems continued on Tuesday, resulting in the deployment of armed soldiers from the First Mechanised Infantry Division by the Presidency. The deployment of over two battalion[s] of soldiers to strife-torn Kaduna State capital came amid reports of burning of buildings and cars by angry youths of both Moslems and Christians faith, who have taken over some roadblocks armed with clubs and axes.

Reports from Kaduna also indicated that bands of irate youths, suspected to be Moslems attacked the motorcade of the Acting Governor, Mr. Stephen Shekari, a Christian, as he toured the state to assess the level of devastation that was done by the protesters. Following the attack on the deputy governor, the government has imposed a tight curfew in the state with a "shoot[-]to[-]kill" order specifically given to the soldiers drafted to maintain peace in the area. No official casualty figure has been released but unofficial figures put the toll at over 80 persons.

For most...of...Tuesday, dead bodies littered major streets and roads. Most military barracks and police stations inside Kaduna have been converted to [a] temporary abode for some residents of the city who have taken refuge in the barracks. Socio-economic activities were also halted as most business outfits remained under lock. Some workers have been holed up in their offices since Monday.

On Tuesday, the state government extended the curfew from 12.00 noon to 6.00 a.m. thus forcing residents to their homes. The state government has ordered all offices and businesses closed with movement in and out of the metropolis banned from 12.00 noon on Tuesday. Specifically, the Nigerian Airforce Base and the First Mechanised Division Headquarters on the outskirts of Kaduna have been taken over by persons whose homes were torched in the orgy of violence that greeted the town on Monday. Some of the fleeing residents who spoke with journalists inside the military barracks said "the Moslems don't want peace with us, they want to make us follow their religion they have to know we will never accept Sharia. Never."

The refugees who were mainly Christians said many Christians have been killed. They warned that "the Moslems should realise that Nigeria is a Christian country. The majority of us in Nigeria are Christians and we will resist any attempt to force us into Islam." However, on the streets of Kaduna, where the State Commissioner of Police, Alhaji Hamisu Isah said normalcy has returned following the deployment of troops, fears of further attack have gripped residents who have commenced marking their houses to portray their faiths. For instance, our reporter in Kaduna saw houses belonging to Christians, marked "Christian Home" and those belonging to Moslems marked "Moslem House".

The commissioner of police who applauded the Federal Government decision to deploy soldiers to assist in controlling the situation, explained that further patrol of both soldiers and police would continue in

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

the central district of the state, especially as fears of further escalation heightens. However, the Assistant Inspector General of Police, Zone A, Mr. Tafa Balogun has blamed the unrest in Kaduna, on "hoodlums" even though he admitted the situation had descended into "pandemonium." Agency reports quoting him on Tuesday said "the last 36 hours have seen some massive disturbances of the public peace in Kaduna State." He confirmed the arrest of 30 persons in connection with the fracas which ensued on Monday.

Already, some of the residents, mostly women and children, have begun to move to neighbouring states amid fresh skirmishes in some suburbs of Kaduna. In Jos, our correspondent sighted fleeing children and women bearing their personal belongings at various motor parks. They were coming from the neighbouring Saminaka Local Government Area of Kaduna State. In Kano, the state government on Tuesday moved swiftly to forestall a possible spill over of the riots with separate meetings with members of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the State Council of Ulama. The meetings were presided over by the Deputy Governor, Dr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje at the conference room of the Government House, Kano.

The Special Adviser to the governor on Religious Affairs, Dr. Mohammed Tahir Adamu told journalists after the separate meetings, that the two groups had agreed to live in harmony in the state. He said that necessary measures had been put in place to guarantee the safety of lives and property in the state. (Keywords: Christian, Muslim, Nigeria, Sectarian Violence.)