

Terminology

Other regions

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11 dead in latest violence in central Nigeria

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The Associated Press

JOS, Nigeria — Christian youths attacked a car full of Muslims returning from a wedding in central Nigeria, killing seven people inside the vehicle and sparking retaliatory violence that left one other person dead, an official said Saturday.

Another three people were killed and several others were wounded Saturday in Jos, when a meeting of a political party aligned with former military dictator Muhammadu Buhari collapsed into violence, witnesses said.

It was the latest unrest in a fertile region that saw more than 500 people killed last year in massacres pitting Christians against Muslims. On Saturday, gunshots echoed through the troubled city of Jos,

causing store owners to close their shops and families to hide.

The violence began as Christian youths blocked a road leading from a neighboring village Friday night, trapping the Muslims inside their car, said lawyer Ahmed Garba, a member of an Islamic religious council. Garba told journalists Saturday that seven people died in the attack and one person survived.

Garba said once news of the attack spread, Muslims began retaliatory violence in the streets of Jos that has left at least one person dead.

Manassie Panpe, the Red Cross state secretary, said officials from the aid organization had found several injured people in the streets Saturday but that information remained scarce.

Nigeria, an oil-rich country of 150 million people, is almost evenly split between Muslims in the north and the predominantly Christian south. Jos is in the nation's "middle belt," where dozens of ethnic groups vie for control.

The Jos violence, though fractured across religious lines, often has more to do with local politics, economics and rights to grazing lands. The government of Plateau state, where Jos is the capital, is controlled by Christian politicians who have blocked Muslims from being legally recognized as citizens.

That has locked many out of prized government jobs in a region where the tourism industry and tin mining have collapsed in the last decades. On Christmas Eve, two bombs went off near a large market in Jos

where people were Christmas shopping. A third hit a mainly Christian area of Jos, while the fourth was near a road that leads to the city's main mosque.

Officials initially said at least 32 died from the blasts, while an official with the National Emergency Management Agency told journalists that he had counted 80 deaths from the explosions and the retaliatory violence that followed.

An Internet message attributed to a radical Muslim sect known in northern Nigeria as Boko Haram claimed responsibility for the bomb attacks. However, the sect had never carried out an attack in that region before.

As the violence began, a political party known as the Congress for Progressive Change was holding a

local meeting in Jos. Plateau state police commissioner Abdurrahman Akano told journalists Saturday that the party held its meeting at a different location than what it told police.

"Hoodlums later hijacked the meeting as they freely used dangerous weapons which led to burning of cars," Akano said. "As people saw the mayhem, they started running and it spread to other parts of the city before the police was able to put the situation under control."

Witnesses told journalists at least three people died and others were wounded in the fighting. The party recently picked Buhari, a disciplinarian who muzzled the press during his year-and-a-half rule in the 1980s, as its presidential candidate for the April election.