



Written by [James Heiser](#) on April 21, 2011

Nigerian Muslims Riot After National Elections

In Nigeria's contested presidential election, President Goodluck Jonathan has been reelected, and the reelection of a candidate from the Christian region of southern Nigeria is being received by Muslims in the north with rioting, arson, and murder. The headline of a *Washington Post* story on the post-election violence — "Mobs overwhelm police in northern Nigeria after vote, leaving behind charred corpses and fear" — well summarizes the chaos which has erupted in the Muslim states of Nigeria. The story continues, "...[o]fficers recovered 31 corpses from the city of Kaduna alone Tuesday, with more likely yet to be found, the commissioner said. Police arrested more than 300 people during the rioting, but many citizens remained inside their homes as police and military helicopters flew overhead and soldiers filled the streets."



While the initial count of those murdered in the violence must be considered incomplete, [a story from CNSNews](#) cites the group International Christian Concern which "said it understood that more than 100 Christians have been killed and more than 40 churches burned down, and noted that even Muslim supporters of Jonathan were being targeted." In fact, the *Washington Post* article says that some rioters could occasionally be quite systematic in determining who inhabited the homes which they chose to attack:

Muslim rioters burned homes, churches and police stations in Kaduna after results showed Nigeria's Christian leader beat his closest Muslim opponent in Saturday's vote. Reprisal attacks by Christians began almost immediately, with one mob allegedly tearing a home apart to look for a Quran to prove the occupants were Muslims before setting the building ablaze.

Jonathan, the candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), decisively defeated Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), winning by a 59-32 margin. According to press reports, Buhari has spread accusations that Jonathan rigged the vote, but international observers dispute Buhari's claims. [The report from Voice of America News](#) — while far from a ringing endorsement — makes it clear that despite Nigeria's poor record regarding "free and fair" elections, the most recent election was a marked improvement over those of the past:

Analysts say, however, that Nigeria's reputation for corrupt, un-democratic, and inhumane rule may be on the mend following its most free and fair elections in recent memory.

The April 16 presidential poll, won by President Goodluck Jonathan, was widely hailed as reasonably fair by international observers like the Commonwealth of former British colonies and the African Union. The outcome set off riots in the country's north, and Jonathan's opponent,



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Muhammadu Buhari, has said he will contest the results in court. But the vote was nonetheless seen as a vast improvement over the previous election, five years ago, that was roundly criticized as chaotic and rigged.

The followers of Buhari were clearly unwilling to abide by the decision of a majority of voters, and the recent history of Islam in Nigeria has been one which is far from "tolerant" of those who will not submit. The stronghold of the CPC is in the dozen Muslim-majority states; according to the CNSNews story, these states "implemented" Sharia law over a decade ago, and "Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change won all 12 of the shari'a states, by margins ranging from 52 points in Kaduna to 82 in Bauchi. Jonathan of the PDP meanwhile swept most of the rest of the country, recording huge majorities in the far south Niger Delta region."

[As previously reported for *The New American*](#), Muslim Jihadists claimed responsibility for a wave of church bombings in Nigeria on Christmas Eve of last year. At least 40 people were killed in that series of attacks, and it was in response to this violence that Christian leaders around the world (including Pope Benedict XVI and Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury) called upon Christians to pray for the persecuted church. As news of the latest round of violence spreads, one may presume that such calls will be renewed this Easter.

Apart from the humanitarian concerns associated with the chaos in Nigeria, there are potential global economic implications to consider. For example, the impact of the violence in Nigeria could spread to the United States, which relies on Nigerian oil. According to the CNSNews report, Nigeria is currently the fourth largest oil supplier for the United States after Canada, Mexico, and Saudi Arabia. As Islamists spread chaos and revolution in several North African and Middle Eastern nations, the new wave of violence in Nigeria simply highlights the risks of American reliance on foreign oil.

Photo: A Nigerian Police officer stands guard as suspected rioters await a court hearing in Kaduna, Nigeria, April 20, 2011: AP Images



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