

Terror group Boko Haram has no place to hide, claims Nigeria's President

25/12/2016 21:57 by admin

Lagos: Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari on Saturday declared that the extremist group Boko Haram was finally crushed by the Nigerian army in the vast northeastern Sambisa forest that was its stronghold.

Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari

His victorious statement came as the Islamic State group, with which one faction of Boko Haram is allied, claimed a successful attack on an army barracks in northeast Nigeria's Yobe state "killed and wounded many." The communique on social media said the attack took place Thursday, the same day President Muhammadu Buhari said troops defeated Boko Haram in its Sambisa Forest stronghold in neighboring Borno state.

It was an indicator that despite Buhari's announcement, Nigeria is unlikely to see an end soon to the deadly suicide bombings, village attacks and assaults on remote military outposts in northeastern Nigeria carried out by the country's homegrown Islamic extremist group.

Already, there are reports that the insurgents have been regrouping in Taraba and Bauchi states, south of their northeastern stronghold in Borno state, and taking advantage of a decades-old conflict in central Nigeria between mainly Muslim nomadic cattle herders and sedentary Christian farmers.

In a statement, Buhari commended Nigerian troops for "finally entering and crushing the remnants of the Boko Haram insurgents at Camp Zero," which is located deep within the heart of Sambisa Forest.

He announced the "long-awaited and most gratifying news of the final crushing of Boko Haram terrorists in their last enclave" and declared "the terrorists are on the run, and no longer have a place to hide."

The Sambisa Forest was where Boko Haram was believed to be holding some of more than 200 schoolgirls kidnapped in April 2014 from a school in the town of Chibok – a mass abduction that brought the Islamic extremists world attention and sparked an international social media campaign #BringBackOurGirls.

"Further efforts should be intensified to locate and free our remaining Chibok girls still in captivity. May God be with them," Buhari said.

Nigerian troops have freed thousands of Boko Haram captives this year, but none of the Chibok girls among 276 seized from a government boarding school.

Dozens of girls escaped within hours of their abduction. In October, 21 Chibok girls were freed through negotiations between the government and Boko Haram, brokered by the Swiss government and the International Red Cross. In May, one Chibok girl escaped on her own. Some 197 remain missing.

The freed girls have indicated that several others have died in captivity from things like malaria and a snake bite.

Boko Haram's seven-year Islamic uprising has killed more than 20,000 people, spread across Nigeria's borders, driven some 2.3 million people from their homes and created a massive humanitarian crisis. The U.N. has warned that 5.1 million people are in danger of starving in northeast Nigeria, including in areas too dangerous to reach because of Boko Haram ambushes.

- (With inputs from AP)