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Nigerian bishops head: Gov't must control violence

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LAGOS, Nigeria -- For the second time in as many weeks, a prominent member of the Nigerian bishops' conference has pushed the government to get a handle on violence perpetrated by the Boko Haram sect.

Archbishop Felix Alaba Job of Ibadan, president of the Nigerian bishops' conference, said that, within the past five years, security agencies had furnished governments at all levels with information on activities of the extremist Islamic sect, but nothing significant had been done to curtail their activities.

"We have spoken at length on it," he said Sept. 11, at the opening Mass of the Nigerian bishops' weeklong plenary in Abakaliki. "The blame as I know it is with the government ...."

"If you go to Maiduguri, you discover that their headquarters is at Central Railway quarters. What has the government done? At the first outbreak, I was there. I have been talking since then," he said.

Violence -- especially in Maiduguri, the Borno state capital -- has claimed hundreds of lives and resulted in the loss of property running into thousands of dollars.

Boko Haram has a somewhat undefined leadership and structure. The group says it is fighting against Western culture and education.

Archbishop Job said the sect was not faithful to the norms and principles of Islam, which they claim is the basis for their activities.

In early September, Lagos Cardinal Anthony Olubunmi Okogie said the continuous spate of mayhem the sect was unleashing on the nation was becoming a matter of national embarrassment capable of disintegrating the nation.

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