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Muslims traditionally greet a lunar eclipse with prayers

**By Barnaby Phillips in Lagos**

Riot police are patrolling the streets of the northern Nigerian city of Maiduguri in the wake of rioting sparked off by the sighting Tuesday night's lunar eclipse.

Hundreds of Muslim youths attacked hotels, bars and brothels after seeing that the moon was starting to disappear.

Reports from Maiduguri say the youths blamed the eclipse on what they call the preponderance of sinful activities in the city. They attacked mainly Christian targets.

The youths poured out on to the streets soon after the eclipse began. They were chanting "God is great !" and "We want Sharia" - the strict Islamic legal code which has already been adopted in Maiduguri.

**Churches targeted**

A Christian leader told the BBC that at least one church was burned down and he said riot police used tear gas to protect other churches.

Several bars and a hotel were also set ablaze.

**Sharia provisions**

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Some soldiers joined the police on the streets of Maiduguri on Wednesday morning, and it appears that the presence of the security forces prevented a potentially explosive situation from worsening.

Islamic leaders in Maiduguri have been quick to condemn the riot, which they blamed on poorly-educated youths who understand nothing of their own religion.

According to the scholars, Muslims traditionally greet a lunar eclipse with prayers.

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