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Sunday, Apr 10th | Last update 09:34:51 AM GMT | **Headlines:** Mairago, Saleh, Nenadi deliver polling units



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16 killed in Borno bomb blast, assassinations

Sunday, 10 April 2011 04:04

Hamza Idris & Yahaya Ibrahim, Maiduguri



A police woman was **killed** and nine other including corps members and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) officials sustained serious injuries following a bomb **blast** at a polling centre at Unguwar Doki of Maiduguri metropolis around 11.50am yesterday.

The attack was launched less than 15 hours after 13 people, including security operatives and officials of various political parties, were **killed** on the eve of yesterday's National Assembly elections in Shani local government area of **Borno** State.

The ANPP chairman of Jere local government area and his son were also killed around 1.00am yesterday when some gunmen attacked his house at Bulabulin in Maiduguri metropolis.

Our correspondents report that initially, four people were confirmed dead after some unidentified gunmen, about 10 in number rode on motorcycles and laid siege on the Shani Divisional Police headquarters in the evening of Friday during the distribution of election materials.

However, the figure of the casualties increased to 13 with many others injured. The corpses and the injured were brought to the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital (UMTH) yesterday.

It was gathered that four policemen, one member of the civil defense, the PDP secretary in the local government, Alhaji Idrissa and other civilians, were **killed** when the gunmen arrived the police station.

Police commissioner Mike Zuokumor who spoke to newsmen on so many issues that trailed yesterday's election confirmed the attack.

Less than 10 hours later, the Jere Local Government, ANPP chairman Alhaji Fannami Ngarnam was also **killed** by unknown gunmen at his Bulabulin residence.

It is not yet clear who the assailants are because some people are saying the killing was politically motivated while others said he was **killed** by armed robbers who trailed him to his house.

"This high profile killing is faraway from what the Boko Haram members are doing," Mala Othman, the state chairman of the ANPP said. "We want the assailants to be uncovered," he said.

While residents were yet to recover from the Shani and Maiduguri killings, some people, who pretended to be prospective voters dropped a bomb at a polling centre at Unguwar Doki of Maiduguri metropolis around 11.50am when residents were preparing to start casting their votes after the completion of accreditation.

The police woman in charge at the scene died in hospital, while nine others sustained serious injuries with about four of them in critical condition at UMTH.

Our correspondent who visited the hospital reports that the hands and legs of the police woman were chopped off while the two eyes of the presiding officer were flocked out by the ravaging **blast**. A corps member who was recruited as an ad hoc staff equally sustained injuries in his eyes and chest.

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A witness, Modu Malami said more than two hundred people were present around the polling centre waiting to cast their votes when the bomb went off.

"We thank God that most of us were metres away when the unfortunate thing happened. It would have been a disaster," he said.

"The loudness of the bomb was devastating...shortly after the incident, a cloud of thick dust and debris of substances enveloped the area," Ali Isma'ila, another witness said.

He said it will be difficult to identify the people who dropped the bomb as everybody around the place was seen as a potential voter.

Dozens of military personnel and anti bomb squad of the police later went to the scene, cordoned the place and evacuated the victims to the UMTH.

Though the commandant of the Joint Task Force (JTF), a lieutenant colonel was seen at the scene, he did not speak to journalists but our correspondent heard him warning his men not to take chances as he moved away to other red spots in the metropolis.

He had earlier said his men had intercepted some political thugs in Jere local government area who were using sharp knives to cut the fingers of people that have contrary political inclinations.

The state police commissioner and other senior security officers in the state later visited the emergency unit of UMTH.

Witnesses said another attack by gunmen was launched at the Unguwar Shanu police station in Maiduguri metropolis. Residents said there were sporadic gunshots around the area and the figure of casualties is not yet known.

In the ensuing confusion, journalists were told that the Maiduguri International Hotel was gutted by fire which had been raging since around 4am yesterday.

When our correspondent visited the scene around 12.10pm yesterday, the five story building was still aflame.

Members of the State fire service were seen trying to control the fire with few working equipment.

Chief Security officer of the hotel Hassan M. Mshelia said the fire was as a result of electrical fault at the ground floor of the hotel even though the building had been under lock and key as a result of strike by the hotel staff over non- payment of salaries.

Sunday Trust reports that similar fire incident happened at the hotel during the election periods of 1999 and 2003. The International Hotel is one of the biggest investments of the **Borno** State government.

Our correspondent gathered that traders were chased out of the Maiduguri Monday Market around 4pm yesterday (Friday) because of security reports that some people were planning to burn down the market in order to frustrate yesterday's election.

Despite the challenges, there was large turnout of voters in most of the polling centres in **Borno** State.

Witnesses said voting had taken place in Shani despite the security challenges while voters at Unguwar Doki where the bomb **blast** occurred were asked to go to about 300 metres away from the scene to cast their votes after the arrival of election officials with new materials.

A day to the election, Professor Tukur Sa'ad, the Resident Electoral Commissioner of INEC in **Borno** State said he had directed Electoral Officers in some local government areas to shop for ad-hoc staff who would replace some university lecturers and corps members who declined to report to their duty posts because of security threats.

Although the commissioner did not name the affected local government areas and the number of trained staff no longer interested in the INEC job, our correspondent gathered that some ad-hoc staff were molested by miscreants' during the botched election of penultimate Saturday at some polling booths because of absence of security men.

"We have addressed all the problems now," Professor Sa'ad said. "We held meetings with the police, army, civil defense and the SSS and have resolved to provide adequate security in all the 3,928 polling units spread in the 27 local government areas of **Borno** state," he added.

"We have engaged 6,856 policemen for the National Assembly election which commences at 8am," he said.

There are over 2,350,000 registered voters in **Borno** State who are expected to cast their votes today.

Meanwhile, Governor Ali Modu Sheriff had in a state-wide broadcast advised residents to come out en-masse to vote. "The security threats are handiwork of detractors but we would not be distracted by anybody," Sheriff said.

Our correspondent reports that despite the security challenges, thousands of people tramped to polling centres for the elections.

Vote cast and counting had been completed in many areas including Ibrahim Taiwo Federal Low cost, Baga Road, Lamisula, Hausari Gwange, New GRA among other locations.

"We want to elect credible leaders, that is why we come out," Nana Talatu, a 60 year old woman said.

Gubernatorial candidate of the ANPP Alhaji Kashim Shettima and the deputy gubernatorial candidate of the PDP Engineer Shettima Pindar condemned the attacks.

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