

**BLEAK EID-EL-KABIR:**

# Mass Killings In Damaturu

- Over 100 Murdered In Suicide Attacks
- Boko Haram Claims Responsibility

NEWS ANALYSIS: Where's the White Paper on North-East Security, Mr President? (Pg2)

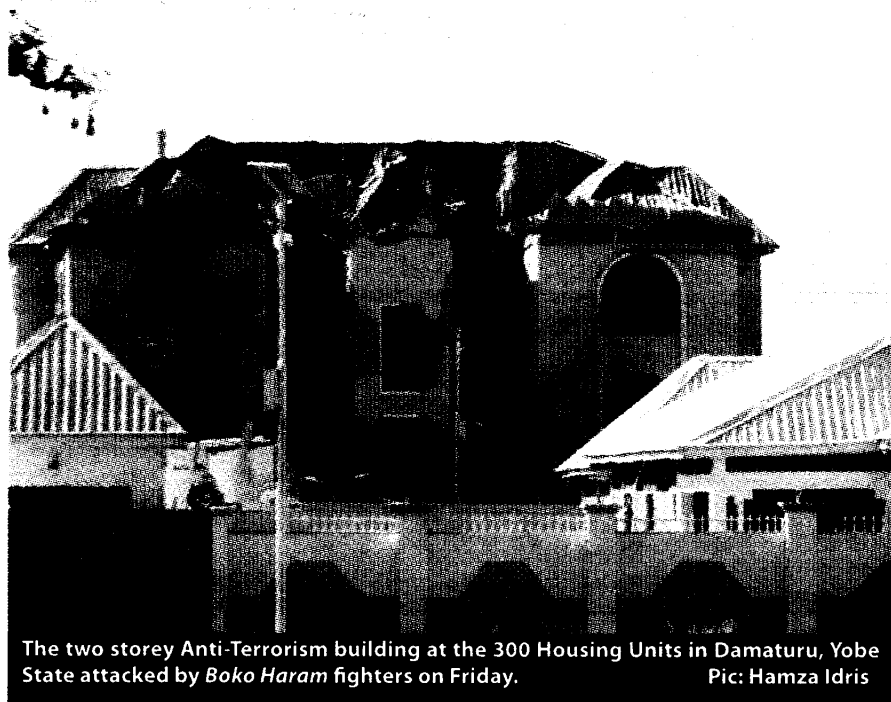
From Hamza Idris & Kabiru Matazu, Damaturu

**O**ver 100 persons were killed on Friday in Damaturu, the Yobe State capital, as a result of sporadic suicide bombings and gunshots launched by suspected members of the Yusifiyya Movement, also called *Boko Haram*, on many security and federal government formations.

Our correspondent, who visited various scenes of the attacks, gathered that more than 20 high profile explosives were either detonated by suicide bombers or thrown into buildings.

Most of the people who died were security agents, including soldiers, police, and officials of the civil defence and the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRCN). Dozens of civilians were also caught in the ravaging flames of the explosives.

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The two storey Anti-Terrorism building at the 300 Housing Units in Damaturu, Yobe State attacked by *Boko Haram* fighters on Friday.

Pic: Hamza Idris

## 'Mass killing'

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This is the first major onslaught on Damaturu since the creation of Yobe State in 1991. Witnesses said the attacks were "catastrophic and unprecedented" because it has shaken the nerves of the town, which was known as "Peaceful Heaven" because it served as the destination of thousands of people who fled Maiduguri violence in the last 20 months.

The night attacks lasted between 6.30pm and 8pm. Baba Kawu, 63, a resident of Nayinawa described the attacks as "the most deadly and most coordinated onslaught on Yobe."

A senior official of the FRSC, who spoke in confidence, said he counted over 150 corpses at the hospital. "The mortuary of the hospital is very small and the facilities there have been overstretched. Most of the dead bodies were laid on the floor, many others outside the building.

"I counted them; I saw over 150 dead bodies and dozens of them were uniform men," he said.

He said because of religion and tradition, many bereaved families had evacuated the remains of their loved ones in order to bury them; a development which prompted authorities to give conflicting figures. The Nigeria Red Cross officials confirmed that 63 people were killed in Damaturu and six churches burnt. The official, who does not want to be quoted, added that two other people were killed and five wounded in a separate attack in Potiskum, the biggest town in the state.

Another official of a federal government agency, who does not want to be named, said he counted 136 dead bodies. According to him "We counted corpses of 135 male and one female. Seventeen male and 4 female were critically injured and are receiving treatment in the hospital," the official said.

He added that places that were either bombed or vandalized include the temporary state police headquarters as well as the permanent police headquarters along Gashua road; the immigrations office; part of the federal government secretariat in which NALDA, NSCDC and medical clinic buildings were affected.

The official said two rifles of the immigrations and one refrigerator were carted away and that six

churches were completely destroyed bamb blasts and eight others vandalized.

He said the Damaturu branch office of the First Bank and UBA were all attacked and huge sums of money carted away.

"At the main roundabout of the town, 15 vehicles including an anti bomb car were attacked, and set ablaze," he said.

Yobe State Police Commissioner Suleiman Mamman, who spoke to newsmen yesterday, said 53 people were killed in the attacks.

"Among the death were 11 policemen and two soldiers; two FRSC men, one civil defence, one immigration, one custom, seven suicide bombers, a professor who was heading towards Maiduguri from Potiskum and a youth service corps member. All the rest are civilians," he said.

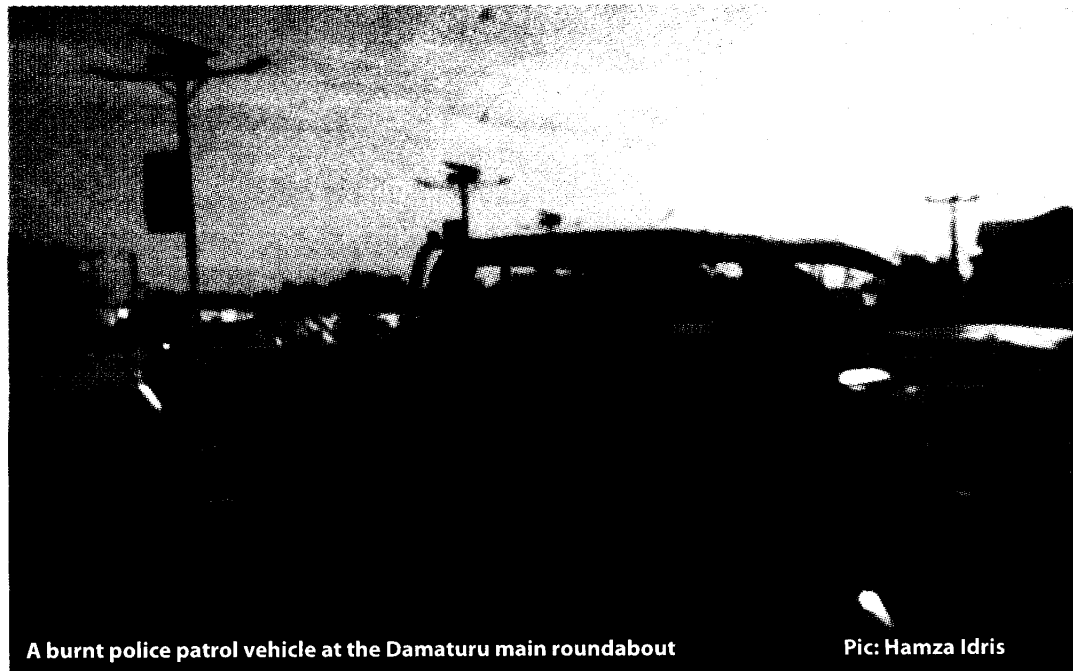
The police commissioner described the attack as "uncalled for." According to him, "anybody that carried the attack does not fear God." Most of the police officers killed were in a six-storey building, which has been their residence. Many of them had retired from service.

The commissioner, who announced a dusk to dawn curfew, also confirmed that six places of worship and many federal government establishments, were burnt. Moses Daniel, a resident of Nasarawa, a suburb in the metropolis said, "My brother was killed at the main roundabout and I purposely come to the hospital to take away his corpse without waiting for unnecessary hospital protocol," he said.

Journalists who visited the morgue at the Sani Abacha Specialists Hospital in Damaturu counted over 130 corpses even as many of them were burnt beyond recognition. The first attack was launched around 6.30pm at a two storey building at the 300 housing units which serves as the headquarters of the anti-Terrorism Unit of the police.

The whole building was reduced to shreds as a result of the suicide attack. Dozens of houses belonging to top Yobe State government functionaries in the quarters were also affected by the seismic impact of the blast.

Many other vehicles were seen burnt with dead bodies inside along the eastern and western bye pass of



A burnt police patrol vehicle at the Damaturu main roundabout

Pic: Hamza Idris



A scene of Boko Haram bloody bomb attacks in Maiduguri

Damaturu.

Eucharía Joseph, a resident of Jerusalem area of Damaturu Metropolis described the Friday deadly attacks as unfortunate. "We don't know our offence, we are just civilians. I hope this kind of disaster will never happen again," she said.

She added that she lost her father, who was at the Church when the attacks were launched. "We are

trying to recover his corpse from the hospital," she said.

Jerusalem is a Christian dominated area in Damaturu. Mr Moses Daniel, a pastor in one of the churches bombed in Damaturu, said the Christian family was worse hit by the attacks. According to him, "Many churches including EYN, ECWA, Cherubim and Seraphim, the main Catholic Church and Winners

Chapel were bombed," he said.

"Our prayer is that peace should return to our land. I also wish to call on our leaders to do justice and fear God," he said.

Deputy Governor of Yobe State Engineer Abubakar Ali, who visited the scenes of the blasts later had a secret meeting with the police commissioner.