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Nigeria: Jos Church Member Killed in Error, Relations Say

BY ANDREW AGBESE, 28 FEBRUARY 2012

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Jos — A man suspected to have been in company of the suicide bomber who struck a [church in Jos on Sunday was killed in error](#) by fellow worshippers as he was actually a church member and not an attacker, relations and authorities said yesterday.

Mr. Adams Joseph Ashaba was lynched to death on the suspicion that he came along with the bomber and tried to escape just after the explosion at the Church of Christ in Nigeria headquarters.

But the Special Task Force and the deceased's relations yesterday said the late Ashaba went to the church along with his wife and two children to worship on Sunday, and he was mistaken to be together with the suicide bomber.

"(The) alleged suicide bomber killed by the angry youths at the premises of the church on 26 Feb 2012 was identified as Adams Joseph Ashaba, a member of the church and not a suicide bomber as alleged," spokesman for STF, Cpt. Mdahelya Markus, said in a statement in Jos yesterday.

A cousin of the late Ashaba, Mr. Julius Autahaa, who spoke to newsmen on behalf of the family, confirmed that the body of the person he saw at the mortuary, brought by security agents on Sunday, was that of Ashaba.

He said Ashaba went to the church with his family and that when the blast occurred, the wife quickly took the children home and came back to look for her husband.

But she could not find him and so contacted other members of his family, he added.

Autahaa said yesterday morning, somebody called them to come to the Jos University Teaching Hospital to identify a corpse.

"When we got there, we were able to identify that he was our cousin who works at Spring Bank, through his nails since his face was battered," he said.

"We wanted to claim the body but we were directed to the STF because we were told we could not claim the body as he was one of the suspects in yesterday's bombing."

He described his late cousin as light complexioned and of average height, just like the corpse.

Ashaba's colleague at the Jos branch of Enterprise Bank, Nasiru Bala, who went to the mortuary to inspect the corpse, also said it was that of Ashaba.

He said identified the corpse by the size of the head.

The COCIN church said at a separate briefing yesterday that one of the people injured in the blast later died in hospital, bringing to four the number of its members killed by the bombing.

The church said at least 50 people, including state Information commissioner Mr. Abraham Yiljab, church warden Mr. Alhamis Gukas and Appolos Dabwang, were injured and are now being treated in different hospitals in Jos.

President of COCIN, Rev. Soja Bewarang, said the church could have suffered more casualties if key elders like Governor Jonah Jang, Gen. Joshua Dogonyaro, Senator John Shagaya and Chief Solomon Lar were around.

The youth wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria, YOWICAN, in a statement, said "our conclusion is that this is a well-crafted strategy by fundamentalist Islamic leaders and politicians to destabilise Nigeria as the serial attacks on Christians is often punctuated by isolated cases of attacks on Muslims to create a false impression that the attacks are against all of us."

Member of the House of Representatives Suleiman Kwande, in a statement, condemned the attack and appealed for calm.

The COCIN church premises became a centre of attraction yesterday as people queued up to be allowed entrance to see the damages created by the blast.

The Jos killing of a church member on suspicion of him being a bomber came few weeks after a Kaduna State director was similarly shot when he was mistaken for a suicide bomber.

Pastor Isuwa Kiforo, a director in the Kaduna state Information ministry, was driving in to the government house when he was shot because he failed to stop for security checks. Days later, Kiforo died of injuries he sustained in the shooting.

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