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FRESH explosion in Kano, UN decries killings

FRIDAY, 27 JANUARY 2012 00:00 FROM SAXONE AKHAINE (KADUNA), ADAMU ABUH (KANO) LAOLU AKANDE (NEW YORK) AND RALPH OMOLOLU AGBANA (LOKOJA) NEWS - NATIONAL

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A FRESH bomb explosion yesterday disrupted the gradual return of normalcy to Kano after the last Friday's blasts that killed about 200 people.

The killings have made the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, to ask the Federal Government to mobilise needed forces to quell the Boko Haram terror attacks.

Besides, the British government has offered to provide support for Nigeria in fighting terrorism.

The latest blast, which injured two persons, occurred at a luxury bus park at the Sabongari area of the Kano metropolis.

The incident occurred at about 1.30 p.m. when thousands of people who were fleeing the metropolis were about boarding various commercial buses heading for safer locations outside Kano.

A pandemonium ensued after the incident as residents of the entire Sabongari area who are yet to recover from the devastating effects of last week's serial bombings in the metropolis, had to scamper in various directions for safety.

The explosion was caused by a small tin can between two luxury buses. The blast was said to have affected the windscreens of one of the buses.

Soldiers and other security personnel cordoned off all roads leading to the luxury bus park as they reassured residents of that part of the metropolis that the situation was not as bad as they thought.

Military spokesperson, Lt.-Col. Iweha Ikediche, confirmed the development, adding that two persons sustained minor injuries as a result of the explosion.

Besides, the 97th Conference of the Evangelical Churches of West Africa (ECWA) opened in Egbe, Yagba West Local Council of Kogi State yesterday amid heavy security.

ECWA President, Rev. A.O. Farinto led 15, 000 worshippers to Egbe for the four-day programme beginning from yesterday and ending on Sunday under the watchful eyes of joint military, police and civil defence corps officers.

The security network will be coordinated by the zonal police headquarters comprising six states including Kogi, Kwara and Ondo states. It is the first time the conference will attract such heavy security since the conference began 97 years ago.

The authorities of ECWA said the decision to fortify ECWA churches and formations in Egbe was informed by the population of worshippers and visitors usually witnessed at the event, pointing out that the security situation in the country meant that "these are extraordinary times which call for extraordinary measures."

Speaking on Wednesday afternoon at his first press conference in the year as he began his second term of five years in office, Ban affirmed his condemnation of the Boko Haram menace as a terrorist act that the global community had to come together and fight.

On Sudan and South Sudan, he said: "We have not been able to see perfect peace and stability." To this end in his second term, Ban said he would continue to be fully engaged on the matter, declaring that at the forthcoming African Union summit meeting in Addis Ababa later this month he would be "really

Ban Ki-moon

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heavily engaging" on the matter with African leaders whose support he observed was very much needed now.

In response to a question on why some of the UN statements restrained from describing the Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria as terrorist acts, Ban said: "I have on many occasions strongly condemned these terrorist attacks by Boko Haram, including that time of the attack against the UN House last year."

But Ban added that, "the Nigerian government should also mobilise full possible forces to address these Boko Haram terrorist attacks."

Promising that the UN on its part "will coordinate with the concerned parties, international organisations and regional organisations," to address the problem, Ban added that he had already made a specific proposal earlier on Wednesday while meeting the UN General Assembly.

That proposal which will strengthen UN capacity in the area of counter-terrorism, according to him includes the need to have "a single coordinated counter-terrorism mechanism combining the currently existing functions."

Disclosing that this proposal had earned support from several member states already, he added that, "we have established a counter-terrorism centre in Saudi Arabia."

In the light of that, the Secretary-General said: "I am going to visit Saudi Arabia to convene the first advisory meeting some time early this year. So, our commitment and determined will to fight against terrorism will be further strengthened and will continue."

Restating that Africa would continue to be one of his major priorities in his second term, he lamented that the crisis in Darfur and Sudan was still continuing.

The British Deputy High Commissioner, Mr. Giles Lever who spoke yesterday, in Kaduna on the security challenges facing Nigeria, pointed out that the activities of Boko Haram in the country, were part of international acts of terrorism which must be fought through bi-lateral support.

Lever spoke to journalists after the opening of a workshop for representatives of Civil Society Organisations using the Freedom of Information (FoI) Act, 2011, saying that the British government was ready to share its capabilities in putting an end to the problem posed by Boko Haram in Nigeria.

Lever said: "The attacks were sickening and barbaric. To kill these many people in the name of some political dispute or religious dispute or whatever the agenda is, it's just wrong. It's quite unacceptable and is causing sufferings to innocent people and so we condemn the attacks unreservedly. We consider ourselves and hope to be friends with Nigeria in good times and bad times and we are willing to work closely with the Nigerian government, to help the Nigerian authorities to combat this menace of terrorism.

"This is something that has affected all of our countries, including my country in 2005 when around 50 people were killed in London by terrorist attacks on our underground trains and on a bus and so while all our societies are thinking of fighting this menace, we need to understand why it's happening."

The British envoy further remarked: "But understanding and excusing it are two completely different things and at the end of the day the people who have committed these appalling attacks have shown that they have no respect for human lives and no respect for individual people, and as I said, we condemn the attacks in the strongest possible terms and we are willing to offer the government of Nigeria and the authorities any support that we can provide as helpful to them in dealing with this problem.

"We have been fighting the challenges of terrorism ourselves for a number of years, sadly and we have developed a national counter-terrorism strategy but again this is on a request basis; we are willing to share and offer our information, our experience and our capabilities whether in large scale of national emergency crisis management or whether it could be in some capabilities such as forensic investigation to gather clues after terrorist attacks.

"There is a very broad range of things that we can offer. We are already working with the Nigerian government on some of these. I must also say we reaffirmed the offer following the terrorist attacks in Kano."

Meanwhile, the Executive Director of the Media Rights Agenda (MRA), Mr. Edetan Ojo, has acknowledged the support offered by the British government in promoting the Freedom of Information (FoI) Act.

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