

# Rage in Jos as suicide bomber strikes

MONDAY, 27 FEBRUARY 2012 00:00 FROM ISA ABDULSALAMI (JOS),  
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## Three die, 38 injured, 30 vehicles damaged

### President reacts to 'odious acts'

THE rage that followed suicide bomber [attack on a church in Jos](#), Plateau State yesterday, was spontaneous. As soon as the news of the early morning suicide bombing spread in the metropolis, some angry youths promptly mobilised and struck at homes and shops owned by residents suspected to be sympathetic to the bombers, which had carried similar strikes in the North.



The youths also destroyed about 30 vehicles during the protest.

The suicide bomber allegedly carried out the attack using an unmarked car at the church filled with about [800 worshippers](#). Although the exact death toll could not be immediately ascertained, security agents and aid workers put the figure at [three, including the suspected bomber](#). But witnesses insisted that the casualty rate was higher. A father, his son and a woman walking into the church at the time of the blast were killed.

The protesters burnt down property and injured some residents suspected of seeing nothing wrong in attacks on places of worship.

The accounts of how the attack was carried out were varied. Some sources said the suicide bombers were three in number and dressed in Nigerian Army uniforms. They struck at the Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN), Jos, at 7.30 a.m. Governor Jonah Jang of Plateau State worships on Sundays in this church but usually attends the Hausa Service, which holds at 10.00 a.m.

In a reaction to the incident yesterday, President Goodluck Jonathan said he was pained by the attack and condemned the reprisal that followed it.

The President said: "It is with great sadness that I received the news of the suicide bombing at the headquarters of COCIN in Jos and the mindless acts of reprisal that followed the incident."

In a statement issued by Dr. Reuben Abati, his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, the President sympathised with the victims of the "odious acts."

"Those who seek to divide us by fear and terror will not succeed," the President said, adding that "the indiscriminate bombing of Christians and Muslims is a threat to all peace-loving Nigerians. I will continue to stand firm to ensure the safety and security of all Nigerians while ensuring that the relevant institutions move against those who disregard the sanctity of life in the pursuit of sectarian ambitions.

"Government is gradually and firmly bringing justice to those behind these attacks and exposing their identities and dismantling their terror infrastructure. Those behind similar acts of terror in recent times

have been arrested and are being investigated with a view to prosecuting them accordingly, as a deterrent to others.”

The President appealed to residents of the state to remain calm and be law abiding.

The only thing common in the various accounts of the witnesses was that one of the suicide bombers died in the explosion after the car went up in flames when it crashed through the gate of the church, which shares the same fence with the Jos branch of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

The blast allegedly shook the nearby buildings to their foundation. A nurse at the Plateau Specialist Hospital, located about half a kilometre from the scene, where the injured were rushed for treatment, said the explosion was deafening.

A security man at the gate of the church told The Guardian that “we don’t open the gate during service except to only our worshippers. When the service was on, a vehicle drove dangerously towards the gate, forced its way into the church premises but its speed was reduced by a motorcycle parked on the path the car took. So, the vehicle laden with explosives did not reach the church building, its apparent target, before it exploded. As you can see, I am injured in the leg and hand. I am also partially deaf as a result of the blast.”

Another account claimed that a man in Army uniform aided the bomber by opening the gate for him to gain entrance into the building. He said the second suspected bomber also in Army uniform jumped out of the car as it approached the gate and forced it opened for his colleague.

Witnesses alleged that soldiers in the area rescued one of the suspects by quickly removing his uniform but the third man was unlucky as the youths succeeded in killing him. They claimed that when a commissioner in the state arrived the scene, he was also attacked by the mob, who also injured him. The commissioner was taken to the Specialist Hospital.

The Guardian learnt that the rampaging youths destroyed 30 vehicles and wounded 38 residents, who were taken to the Plateau Specialist Hospital. An official of the hospital said: “We have two female dead bodies with us and 38 people are seriously injured.”

The Special Task Force (STF) spokesman, Captain Mdahyelya Markus, described as “unfortunate” the allegation of complicity by men in Army uniforms with the suicide bombers. He said journalists should use the statement he issued last night as containing the true representation of the incident.

In the statement, Markus said: “This is to inform the general public and the good people of Plateau State that there was an explosion at Headquarters COCIN Church near Central Bank of Nigeria, Jos on February 26, 2012 by 0715 hours. The suspected suicide bombers arrived in the premises of the church in a Golf car. The Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) exploded with one of the bombers inside the vehicle while the other suspect that alighted and attempted to escape was killed in the process. The explosion damaged some vehicles at the premises of the church. All law-abiding citizens are enjoined to go about their lawful businesses. Any act of lawlessness would not be tolerated by the security agencies. Thank you and God bless you all.”

The state government described the bomb blast as uncalled for at a time the state had been peaceful.

Addressing a press conference yesterday, Special Adviser to the Governor on Media and Publicity, Pam Ayuba, said the government saw “this as an attempt to bring the state to disrepute. Government in this regard condemns this unprovoked attack in its totality and sues for peace among citizens. Government is calling on all citizens to be security conscious and report any suspicious moves to the security

agencies.”

Answering questions from journalists on why the attack occurred in Jos North Local Council, which is under a state of emergency, Pam said “it is true that Jos North, Jos South, Barkin Ladi and Riyom are under a state of emergency, government is working closely with the security agencies to ensure permanent peace in the areas.”

He said the government could not explain why the dastardly act was carried out at the time, adding that he could not confirm the number of casualties.

A security meeting was immediately summoned by Jang, which was attended by the STF Commander, Maj.-Gen. Mohammed Bala Ibrahim, the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Emmanuel Dipo Ayeni and the Commandant, National Security Defence Corps, Mr. Desmond Agu.

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), which confirmed the explosion, said three people including the suspected bomber died in the blast.

The explosion came barely a week after the Federal Government began the gradual withdrawal of troops from the state.

Meanwhile, NEMA has received 301 Nigerian returnees from Libya in two batches at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos.

Receiving the returnees on behalf of the Director-General of NEMA, the Director, Search and Rescue of the agency, Air Commodore Alexander Bankole, said they were brought to the country through multilateral support from the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) while NEMA provided them with logistics.

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