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## Nigeria: 52 Die, 79 Injured in Potiskum School Blast

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By Mohammed Abubakar, Adamu Abuh, Azimazi Momoh Jimoh, Karls Tsokar and Njadvara Musa

**A SUICIDE bomber dressed in a school uniform, burst onto the students' assembly ground of Government Science Secondary School (GSSS), Potiskum, Yobe State and killed 52 students yesterday. Seventy-nine others were injured.**

Potiskum is the largest commercial city in the state, and 100 kilometres west of Damaturu, the state capital.

According to an eyewitness, "The suicide bomber disguised as one of the students to attend the school's morning assembly, before the back-strapped bomb was detonated. He was carrying a school bag to the assembly ground.

Many of the students were killed on the assembly ground with over seven dozens injured by shrapnel. We were terrified and scared as many of us had to run for safety, before troops and policemen rushed to the scene this morning for rescuing."

Confirming the blast yesterday in Damaturu, the Yobe State Police Commissioner, Danladi Markus said: "It was a double tragedy this morning at one of the secondary schools in Potiskum, where a suspected Boko Haram suicide bomber dressed in a school uniform burst into the students' morning assembly; and detonated a bomb, killing over four dozens of innocent students between the ages of 12 and 17. It is exactly one week, when a blast claimed the lives

of over 30 Muslims here in Postiskum, while celebrating their new Islamic calendar year.

"All the injured in Monday morning blast, were quickly evacuated to the General Hospital, Potiskum for treatment. It is very unfortunate for these innocent students to fall into the hands of terrorists that devised a new strategy of perpetrating criminal activities and terrorism here in Yobe State."

It was learnt that the school premises and neighbouring wards on the east and west flanks of the school, have been cordoned off by the military and police to prevent any further attacks in Potiskum.

The school authorities said that the Boko Haram members had devised a new method of accessing any crowd to kill at all costs.

Decrying the violence, President Goodluck Jonathan condoled with the government and people of Yobe State.

In a statement, by his Adviser on Media and Publicity, Reuben Abati, Jonathan prayed God to grant parents who were bereaved the fortitude to bear the loss.

"President Jonathan also conveys his deepest sympathies to all parents who lost their beloved children in the heinous attack on the Government Science Secondary School which appears to have been carried out by a suicide bomber.

"The president condemns the dastardly murder of the students on their school's assembly ground as they prepared to begin another week of study in pursuit of a better life for themselves and their families.

"He assures the grieving parents and people of Yobe State that no matter how long it takes, the Federal Government will ensure that all those responsible for the senseless murder of so many promising youngsters and the continuing acts of terrorism across the country are brought to justice and made to pay for their atrocious crimes.

"The president similarly assures all Nigerians that in spite of seeming setbacks, his administration remains fully committed to winning the war against insurgency and terrorism," the statement noted.

Nigeria, Jonathan affirmed, would ultimately overcome the security challenges imposed by domestic terrorists and their foreign allies, with the dedication of its Armed Forces and national security agencies, as well as the continued support and cooperation of all patriotic citizens.

Governor Ibrahim Gaidam of Yobe State also condemned the violence. He lamented that this was the fifth time in a little over one year when schools in Yobe State were brutally attacked and many students killed without any genuine cause.

Gaidam listed the affected schools to include, Government Secondary School, Damaturu; Government Secondary School Mamudo; College of Agriculture, Gujba; Federal Government College, Buni-Yadi; and now Government Comprehensive School, Potiskum.

The governor's grief was contained in a statement by his Special Adviser on Public Affairs and Information, Abdullahi Bego. It was made available yesterday to reporters in Damaturu.

In the statement, Gaidam regretted that all of these dastardly attacks took place under an emergency rule declared in Yobe, Borno and Adamawa states by Jonathan.

It reads in part: "In theory, the emergency rule declaration was a signal that more vigorous steps would be taken to protect the lives and property of people in the affected states and deploy the full might of the Federal Government to restore peace and security.

"Unfortunately, this has not been fully the case. Instead of forcing insurgents and criminals to flee; the insurgents are forcing innocent people to flee and making life miserable for everyone.

"Governor Gaidam believes that President Goodluck Jonathan has a very urgent responsibility to explain to the people of Yobe State and people all across the affected states why murderous and callous insurgent and criminal attacks are still on the rise despite the state of emergency."

On how to end insurgency, the statement said: "The governor also believes that it is not just enough for the Federal Government to condemn the almost daily rounds



Photo: Albert Gonzalez Farran/UN

file photo.

of violence. He believes urgent action must be taken right now to restore fast waning public confidence by doing whatever it takes to stop the escalating violence."

On the part of the state government, he said all public schools around Potiskum area had been closed, until a full review of the security situation was undertaken.

He therefore, called on people throughout Yobe State to exercise restraint and continue to pray for the intervention of God.

He assured members of the general public that despite the state of emergency in place, he would continue to do everything within his powers to get the Federal Government to do more and also to continue to offer his administration's support to all people affected.

To this end, he directed hospital authorities in Potiskum to provide immediate medical support to victims of the school attack free of charge.

"The Yobe State government will also foot the medical bills of some of the victims who have been referred to the Federal Medical Centres in Nguru and Azare," Gaidam said.

He directed the commissioner of health to undertake a regular review of the conditions of victims and suggest whatever additional measures might be needed to help them recover within the shortest period.

Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar noted that the violence underscored the need for the government at all levels, including elders and opinion leaders to find a permanent solution to the problem of insurgency in the country.

Atiku noted that the tragic incident in Potiskum was not the first time in Yobe State and indeed in the troubled North East region where innocent young people would be killed simply because they wanted education.

"One expects that knowing the anti-education mindset of the perpetrators of these heinous crimes, the relevant authorities should have done their bit to ensure that at least, our educational institutions are provided with additional security," Atiku said.

Atiku appealed to the perpetrators of this crime and similar ones in the past to have a rethink and refrain from taking life which none of us could create.

He expressed his condolences to the government and people of Yobe State, the management, staff and students of the school, the parents and guardians of the affected students and all those who may have been adversely affected by the senseless murder of these innocent students.

Senate President David Mark commiserated with the government and people of Yobe State especially the bereaved parents.

Mark described the attack as barbaric and inhuman, saying, "it is condemnable by any right-thinking member of the society."

He said the war on Nigerians by terrorists without boundaries "where men, women, children and even the unborn are victims, speaks volumes of the agenda of the terrorists.

"What is the offence of these innocent children? Even in warfare, there are boundaries. Even when enemies are known, women and children are usually spared, especially school children.

"No matter the level of anger, it cannot be endless. Enough is enough. We must remember that no evil done to man by man would go unpunished, if not by man, certainly by the Almighty.

"We cannot continue this way. It is not a way of life. It is time for a ceasefire. What do we achieve by ceaseless killings? How can we suddenly forget our brotherhood?"

Mark implored security operatives to step up action against the terrorists, saying that "with increased intelligence and surveillance, a lot could be achieved."

Besides, the Minister of Interior, Patrick Abba-Moro has said that the Federal Government will continue to mobilise resources to protect the territorial integrity of the country.

The minister spoke yesterday in Abuja when he received in his office the German Ambassador to Nigeria, Michael Zenner.

He said that "every Nigerian and observer of the Nigerian scene is aware that this war is ongoing and what the Nigerian government has consistently tried to do until this war is over is to continue to mobilise all resources that are available."

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