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# Dozens feared killed in Yola bomb blasts

By Alifa Daniel, Karls Tsokar (Abuja) and Njadvara Musa (Maiduguri), Emmanuel Ande (Yola) on February 26, 2016 4:12 am

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Fire fighters at the scene of a bomb blast, which occurred on the premises of Adamawa Police Command's Anti-Bomb Squad and Motor Traffic Department in Jimeta, Yola State ...yesterday PHOTO: NAN

- **'Boko Haram is world's deadliest terrorist group'**
- **28,750 Nigerians die in nine years of insurgents attacks**
- **Troops slay 23 terrorists, rescue 150 captives in Borno**

IT was a gruesome bloodbath with body parts littering the Yola, Adamawa State police station and further away after bombs exploded about 11:30 a.m. yesterday, killing "dozens of persons."

The Adamawa State Police Commissioner Mohammed Gazali said four of his men died in the explosions but it is feared that the number could be higher.

Though he also said the blasts were caused by bombs recovered from Boko Haram insurgents and warehoused by the police alongside other exhibits, The Guardian learnt that it is also being strongly suspected that the explosions are the handiwork of Boko Haram operatives who may have planted explosives in one of the offices in the building used by the anti-bomb squad, State Investigation Bureau (SIB) and Motor Traffic Division (MTD).

Meanwhile, a grim report on the huge death toll caused by Boko Haram shows the world's deadliest terrorist group is not in the Middle East but at home here in Nigeria.

The report put together by the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in association with a pro-Christian global charity Open Doors, is titled "Crushed but not defeated: The impact of persistent violence on the Church in Northern Nigeria."

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The report which will soon be officially released, said about 28, 000 Nigerians had died in terrorism-related circumstances.

In another development, troops of 7 Division of Nigerian Army and Camerounian Armed Forces in coordinated ground and aerial bombardments by Nigerian Air Force (NAF) fighter jets killed 23 Boko Haram terrorists and rescued 150 captives in the Talala-Banki-Kumshe border axis of Borno State.

Buildings damaged by the Yola explosions include those of Majilisa Primary School, Jimeta Central School, NITEL , the Post Office and Central Prisons .

An eyewitness, a policeman, told The Guardian: “I was upstairs when I heard the explosions, then followed by screams from children in a school close to the station.

By this time, the entire area including the station and school was covered with thick, black smoke from the fire that was raging at the station. Looking around on the ground, I saw pieces of human flesh and parts of dismembered limbs.”

A teacher at the Federal University of Technology, Yola, Dr. Gabriel Teneke who narrowly escaped death but sustained severe head wounds told The Guardian from his hospital bed in Karewa Quarters in Jimeta that he was at the police station to secure bail for his brothers when the explosions occurred.

“ My brother and I were able to climb down only to discover that my car was damaged and the car next to it was burning. I managed to drive to Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) office but could not continue because I was bleeding profusely until Good Samaritans came to my rescue and took me to the hospital”, a grateful Teneke said.

The state coordinator of National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) Alhaji Sa’ad Bello , declined comments until security agents cleared the area to allow his men to move inside the premises and make proper assessment.

According to World Watch Monitor (WWM) which revealed plans to release the CAN/Open Doors report in Abuja, CAN has adopted the report as the “factual foundation of a joint declaration which demands that the government quell the violence and guarantee religious freedom, and asks the UN to launch an inquiry into atrocities.”

Details of the yet-to-be published report made available to The Guardian showed that Islamist insurgency spearheaded by Boko Haram – but not confined to its members – killed more than 4,000 Christians in 2015 with 11,500 killed between 2006 and 2014. If the dead of other faiths are included, the number would be far higher.

The WWM story announcing the planned release of the report quoted CAN Secretary General, Rev. Musa Asake, as saying that it was the first time the association was going public to sign a declaration which gave the true picture of the persecution Christians were going through in Nigeria.

Asake adds: “This event gives us an opportunity to let the entire world know what the Christians in Nigeria have been going through.”

WWM report reads further: From 2006 to 2014 the period covered, the report says religion-based violence killed an estimated 11,500 Christians in Nigeria’s north. It says 13,000 churches were destroyed, abandoned or closed during the period, and 1.3 million Christians fled to safer regions in the country.

Over the past two years, the situation worsened; violence spilled over into neighbouring countries Chad and Cameroun.

In 2014, Boko Haram was the world’s deadliest terror group, ahead of the self-proclaimed Islamic State, according to the Global Terrorism Index.

“This targeted violence, discrimination and marginalisation of Christians in Northern Nigeria, if unchecked and halted, could lead to the extinction of the Christian faith and Christian communities in Northern



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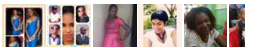
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Nigeria,” the CAN asserts.

“Christians in the Northern region have for long been abandoned to their own fate by the Nigerian authorities.”

The report recommends “There is still a large Christian presence in Northern Nigeria with potential to unite and stand strong. But the Church in Northern Nigeria will need to find a way to not close in on itself and disengage from society.”

In 2014, the latest year covered by the report, Open Doors says nearly 2,500 Christians were killed and 103 churches attacked. In 2015, beyond the scope of the report, the carnage only intensified with more than 4,000 Christians dead and nearly 200 church attacks,

From 2006 to 2014, the report estimates Christian deaths represented 41% of all violent deaths in the region during the period, even though Christians represent about 31% of the region’s population.

The result: Churches emptied, businesses were lost and abandoned, Christian-Muslim relations deteriorated and communities segregated along religious lines, according to the report.

“Although the conflict has undeniable political, economic, social and ethnic components, a strong religious dimension has been identified by this research.” The mix of those factors, the CAN said in its joint declaration, “is what makes Christians extra vulnerable. Media, policy makers and international role players should acknowledge the religious dimension of the conflict in Nigeria.”

Based on 102 interviews of church leaders and members and nine focus groups across the North, the report said nearly two-thirds of the participants claimed church membership had decreased between 2006 and 2014. Gone also is the money those former congregants provided the churches and their programs.

Four out of every five Christians interviewed for the report said perceptions of Muslims had soured during the past 10 years. The Christian virtue of forgiveness, participants told researchers, “is more difficult than ever to summon.”

Disclosing the attacks on Wednesday, Acting Director of Army Public Relations, Col. Sani Usman said during the “joint coordinated military operations” with Camerounian Armed Forces, four AK 47 rifles were destroyed with the capture of a gun truck mounted with an Anti-Aircraft Gun and two AK 47 rifles as well as a motar and dane gun.

The Army spokesman’s statement read in part: “The joint operation which was carried out with Cameroonian forces was quite successful as a number of the terrorists were killed, while other sustained gunshot wounds while fleeing into the bush. Their weapons and equipment were either destroyed or captured by the joint troops.”

“Unfortunately, three soldiers sustained injuries, and a vehicle damaged as a result of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED). Troops also encountered another 10 other IEDs along the route of advance which were cleared. Most of the terrorists run in disarray towards Fatake where troops on blocking position cleared them.”

On other casualties of operations, the statement said: “Along the Talala axis despite an IED” which injured a soldier and “damaged a vehicle, the operation is progressing very well, as NAF has been assisting with interdiction and surveillance.”

Usman added: “Troops at Kodo rescued 150 persons mainly children. In addition, a house with Boko Haram terrorists’ flag at Fatake caught fire with several ammunition explosions in which three Boko Haram terrorists were killed.”

He said the routing of terrorists in the border areas with Cameroun, were successful because of the steady supply of needed logistics into the various formations and units fighting the insurgents in Borno State.

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