

# Over 80 dead as army admits error in 10th accidental bombing in two years

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- **Affected persons to be compensated, survivors to be treated free – Kaduna govt**
- **Sunday bombing one too many, say HURIWA, Arewa youths**
- **Parents of abducted Zamfara varsity students protest 72 days of captivity**

The Nigerian military has yet again been caught in misdirected airstrikes, with the latest incident claiming over 80 lives in Kaduna State.

After some studied silence since the incident on Sunday night amid denials by the Nigerian Air Force (NAF), the Kaduna State government yesterday disclosed that the bomb that struck Tudun Biri, a community within Igabi Local Government Area of the state, was caused by a Nigerian Army drone that mistook villagers for terrorists.

However, a credible source from the local government area, who pleaded anonymity, confirmed that no fewer than 83 persons were killed when the bomb was dropped around 9:00p.m. while some villagers gathered to commemorate Maulud (birth of Prophet Muhammad) in the village, while the figure of those injured is 53.

Our correspondent, who visited the Emergency Department of Barau Dikko Teaching Hospital in Kaduna on Monday, reported that over 50 injured patients were being attended to while those with severe cases had been taken to the theatre for corrective surgeries. Majority of those injured were children and women. In a meeting that was held by the deputy governor, Dr Hadiza Sabuwa Balarabe, which was attended by heads of security agencies, religious and traditional leaders, the Nigerian Army explained the circumstances that led to the unfortunate and unintended attack.

General Officer Commanding One Division Nigerian Army, Major V.U. Okoro, said the army was on a routine mission, which it had launched against terrorists, but it unfortunately affected members of the community.

At the end of the meeting, Balarabe offered condolences from the government and the people of Kaduna to the families that lost their loved ones, and prayed for the repose of the victims' souls, adding that the victims will be compensated.

Samuel Aruwan, Overseeing Commissioner, Ministry of Internal Security and Home Affairs, Kaduna State, said search and rescue operations were still ongoing yesterday as the government evacuated dozens of injured victims to Barau Dikko Teaching Hospital.

Heads of security agencies who attended the meeting included the Commissioner of Police, M.Y. Garba; and Director of the Department of State Services (DSS), Abdul Eneche; while the chairman of Kaduna chapter of Jam'atu Nasril Islam (JNI), Prof. Shafi'u Abdullahi, led other religious leaders to the meeting. Also present was the District Head of Rigasa, Alhaji Aminu Idris, in whose domain the incident occurred.

Governor of the state, Senator Uba Sani, has ordered an investigation into the drone attack by the military, just as the government directed a state-owned hospital to offer free treatment to all the survivors.

In a statement by the governor's Chief Press Secretary, Mohammed Lawal Shehu, the governor ordered a thorough investigation to forestall future occurrences, by immediately convening an emergency security meeting.

Earlier reports had blamed NAF for the attack, but the force released a statement saying they were not involved in the tragedy, as they had not carried out any air operations within Kaduna during the time frame of the attack.

Sunday's incident takes the tally to 10 of such misguided missiles, which were targeted at bandits and terrorists but accidentally hit wrong targets, sending scores of Nigerians to their early graves.

A previous tally from media reports had shown at least nine incidents of miscalculated airstrikes between September 2021 and January 2023. Zamfara, Yobe, Katsina, Kaduna, Niger and Nasarawa are some of the states where the incidents have occurred.

Speaking on the latest incident, Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA) has called for immediate, comprehensive and transparent investigation into the bombardments that killed villagers on Sunday night, describing it as one too many.

HURIWA asked the government to identify the victims and their direct families for purposes of adequate compensation and also tasked the military to put measures in place to avoid such a very unfortunate operational error.

The Arewa Youth Consultative Forum (AYCF) also condemned the bombing. President of AYCF, Shettima Yerima, said it was particularly sad that a security agency whose primary responsibility is to protect lives and properties are now the ones killing people on the guise of 'mistake'.

MEANWHILE, parents of abducted students of Federal University of Gusau in Zamfara State have staged a peaceful protest at the Government House, demanding the unconditional release of their children. They want Governor Dauda Lawal and security agencies to rescue their children who have been in captivity for 72 days, unhurt.

No fewer than 24 students of the university, 10 construction workers, a staff of the university and his daughter were kidnapped on September 22, this year in Sabon-Gida, a community hosting the main campus of the university. However, 13 students and three construction workers have been rescued while others are still in captivity.

The protesters vowed to remain at the Zamfara State government house until their children are released. They said the abductors had contacted some of them and the only condition they gave was to negotiate with the government.