

## SPOTLIGHT

# Gov calls for calm as casualties, damaged buildings trail Ibadan explosion

From Seye Olumide, Rotimi Agboluaje and Moyosore Salami (Ibadan)

THERE was pandemonium in Ibadan the capital of Oyo State at about 7:18pm yesterday when an explosion rocked the city leaving many residents panicky.

While some speculated it was an earth tremor, others insisted it was an explosion but they were not specific if it was a bomb or gas explosion.

There was also initial confusion about the exact location of the explosion. Some said it happened around Bodija, while others claimed it was close to Samanda near Sango area.

While the cause of incident and casualty figures remain sketchy, it was however gathered that some victims of the explosion were admitted into various hospitals, particularly the University College Hospital (UCH), as calls for blood donors went viral to enable emergency officials save lives. The roads were also deserted and many of the residents were forced indoors as a result of the blast. Not less than 20 victims were said to be on admission at UCH.

The affected areas and property include: BON Hotel, ACE Mall, Le Chateau Bodija in Ibadan North local government area. Other places include a section of the Governor's Office, Secretariat, Oyo State House of Assembly, residence of the former Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Chief Ajibola Ige, some buildings at Olo-



Rescue efforts ongoing at the scene of the explosion last night.

guneru, New Garage, Basorun, Akobo, Sango and Eleyele areas.

Glass windows, doors were shattered while roof ceilings were dropped in the affected areas.

There were divergent views over the blast as residents of the affected areas described it as earth movement while others described it as blast of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED).

Thick smokes rent the air in the affected areas which resulted in the hospitalisation of the victims in various hospitals.

Security operatives including the police, Western Security Network code named Amotekun and local vigilantes have taken over the affected areas.

Security vehicles were sighted conveying the victims to some selected hospitals in the state capital for medical attention.

No details about death yet as at the time of this report but three buildings were said to have collapsed due to the inci-

dent.

The state government had in a statement by the Commissioner for Information, Dotun Oyelade, confirmed the explosion.

The statement read: "There are various interpretations of the incident but it is important for us to state categorically that the state government has taken over and in full control of the unfortunate occurrence in order to mitigate the incident.

"All security service chiefs, including para-military chiefs and Fire Operatives have been deployed by the governor to reign in the spillover from the explosion.

"His Excellency, Governor Seyi Makinde, therefore implores citizens to calm down and be rest assured that their interests are being looked after."

Dr. Similade Adeodun, an expert, said the explosion came as a shock and it is widespread across Ibadan. He said the magnitude was

not that much and could not be compared to the January 27, 2002 bomb blast explosion in Lagos.

Engineer Dejo Olugbodi said: "The explosion is of high place device. Ijo Ilese, behind the Secretariat House was badly damaged. It is not likely to be a tremor. On getting to Iyana Bodija near Elewure, when I got to Dejo Oyelese, I couldn't go further and had to retrace my step."

The State PPRO, Adewale Oyefeso, said the explosion happened around Dejo Oyelese Street, Bodija around 7:44p.m. He said the cause of the explosion was unknown, and no casualty could be confirmed as the search continues.

"The Commissioner of Police Oyo State Command, in the company of some senior officers and other responders, are on the ground for on the spot assessment and rescue operation. The Oyo State Police Command has also deployed armed and plain clothed officers to forestall any breakdown of law and order."