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Daily Independent (Lagos)

Nigeria: 11 Die, Scores Injured in Abuja Bomb Blasts

Victor Ebimomi (lagos), Innocent Oweh (abuja) And Audu Onoja 31 December 2010

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Jos — Happy New Year

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Two months after some bombs were set off in Abuja killing several people and injuring tens of others, another explosion rocked the city on Friday.

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The nation's capital experienced its first baptism of terrorists' callousness on October 1 while the nation was celebrating its 50th independence anniversary.

The bomb blast of Friday went off inside the Mammy Market at the Sani Abacha Barracks, which is just a five-minute drive from Aso Rock.

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As at the time of going to press, the information was still sketchy but witnesses said it went off around 7.00 p.m. and by the time the dust settled, 11 people were confirmed dead while several others sustained varied degrees of injuries.



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Friday's blast came exactly a week after similar explosions rocked Jos, the Plateau State capital killing at least 62

people at the last count.

Fear of fresh attacks has made several churches in Jos and neighbouring towns enlist the services of private guards to secure their worship centres.

Security agencies have, however, been put on red alert all over the country.

A high ranking security source told our correspondent on Friday that heavy security has been thrown around public offices, vital installations and religious places.

Barracks, airports and residents of public officials are now heavily monitored.

The move is a fallout of the attack in Jos and Abuja.

Although, there are no report of immediate threats to Southern states, a worried President Goodluck Jonathan has directed that all regions in the country should be covered.

Saturday Independent investigation revealed that most of the churches in Jos now have private guards manning the entrance to their premises.

The fears are heightened as Christians are expected to gather at various worship centres to celebrate the New Year.

Worshippers now go through routine checks before they are allowed to go in to worship for fear of unwanted guests sneaking into the churches to attack worshippers.

Church leaders in the state in November last year, had alerted the government and security agencies to what they called "planned moves by some Islamic fundamentalists to attack churches in Jos - especially pastors of several churches in Jos - and its environs," but both the government and the police authorities in the state allegedly waived the fears aside, calling them alarmists.

Speaking in an interview with Saturday Independent on the development, North Central Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Yakubu Pam, said he expected the Federal Government and the Plateau State leadership to have done everything humanly possible to bring lasting peace back to Jos over the years rather than shedding crocodile tears when the did had already been done.

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He asked rhetorically, "what has become of the judicial commissions of inquiry into the past crises in Jos and what has happened to the report of Presidential report of Chief Solomon Lar committee that sat for several months and finally handed their reports to President Goodluck Jonathan?"

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He gave his backing to the decision of church leaders in the state to enlist the services of private guards to guide themselves, saying worshippers' security should be the upper most consideration of their leaders.

Pam, who had a bitter encounter with former President Olusegun Obasanjo, when Pam was the CAN chairman in the state, tasked the state government and Jonathan to go all out to fish out those behind the Christmas Eve multiple bomb blasts in Jos with a view to bring the perpetrators of the act to book.

On the other hand, the Plateau State Commissioner for Information, Gregory Nyelong, told Saturday Independent that the government of Governor Jonah Jang is alive to its responsibility and has been doing all it could together with Jonathan to restore peace in Jos.

He said over N20million has been spent by the state government in providing relief materials and hospital consumable for the treatment of the injured at the University of Jos Teaching Hospital and other hospitals in the area.

He called on other well-meaning Nigerians to come to the aid of the state, saying those who did not wish Plateau well are trying all they could to destroy the peace of the state.

Nyelong called on the people of the state especially residents of Jos to be vigilant and report any strange movement of persons to security agencies for prompt action.

Since the Christmas Eve bombings in Jos, reprisal attacks have taken place around Angwan Rukuba, Tina Junction and Dutse Uku areas of Jos North Local Government area of the state.

Following the development, the state Commissioner of Police, Abdulrahman Akano, had to douse the tension in Jos saying the crisis was not religious but political, advising the political class to iron their differences in the interest of peace.

He stated in an interview with journalists that Christians should go about their Sunday activities without fear of molestation as security arrangements have been put in place to ensure their safety in their churches.

He said bomb experts would be drafted to churches to scrutinise worshippers and Special Task Force (STF) members would be there to complement the police duty by providing security around the churches, while investigations are continuing to fish out the perpetrators of the bomb blasts.

Meanwhile, Deputy Governor of the state and governorship aspirant under the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Pauline Tallen, has warned that no amount of pull-down-syndrome embarked upon by Jang and his loyalists could stop her from going ahead with her ambition to contest this year's governorship election in the state.

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Tallen, at a press conference held on Thursday, at her private residence at Rayfield in Jos, told journalists that the moves by the government of the day to link her to the Christmas Eve bomb blasts in Jos was very unfortunate, saying it was wrong for her boss to regard the ugly incident as the handiwork of his

political opponents.

She said she had done no wrong to receive such "unpleasant attacks from the government and its agents," since she made known her ambition to run the governorship race.

She accused the governor of playing to the gallery by his actions, which are centered on his ambition instead of the people.

According to her, "I'm even pained that in the midst of this chaotic situation, the leadership in the state is more concerned about its ambition rather than the lives of the ordinary Plateau man affected by the bomb blasts."

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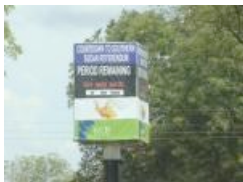
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