



No district, emirate council for Hausa/Fulani in Jos -Jang

By Onoja Audu
Correspondent, Jos

PLATEAU State Government has reacted angrily to a suggestion made at the just concluded peace parley organised by the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) in Kaduna saying the state cannot create separate

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Reps extend 2011 budget to March 2012

• Approve N31b virement for Jonathan

By Rotimi Akinwumi
Correspondent, Abuja

MEMBERS of the House of Representatives on Wednesday extended the life of the 2011 budget to March 2012.

However, the extension as pronounced by the House, will only be applicable to funds meant for execution of capital

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Debris from the destroyed houses and shops at No 32 Ogbomoso Road, opposite Scala Cinema, Kaduna after the explosion ... on Wednesday. Inset: Suleiman Ibrahim, a victim of the blast. Photo: Nath Jibrin

17 killed, many wounded in Kaduna explosion

By Abdulkareem Haruna, (Maiduguri) and Baba Ngedu (Kaduna)

An early morning explosion in the northern Nigerian city of Kaduna claimed several lives on Wednesday, but conflicting accounts trail the source of the blast.

While eyewitnesses claim two men on a motorbike, suspected to be 'suicide' bombers, detonated an explosive wrapped in a polythene bag, police sources suspect it may have resulted from a gas cylinder in one of the shops in the affected area. The casualty figure has been put

between 10 and 17 by different sources.

This is coming barely 24 hours after the pan-Northern socio-political group, Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), rounded off its peace conference in the Kaduna State capital.

The incident took place at a block of shops at No. 32 Ogbomoso Road, by Katsina Road, opposite Scala Cinema, in the centre of Kaduna metropolis.

The explosion razed more

• Gunmen kill police Inspector in Maiduguri

Same-sex marriage: FG warns U.S., UK, others to leave Nigeria alone

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than 10 shops, while others were destroyed.

An eyewitness told *Daily Independent* that the explosion took place at about 9.00 a.m. when traders on the road were settling down for the day's business.

The blast was felt about three kilometers away, up to Cameroun Road and the ever busy Ahmadu Bello Road.

The impact of the blast left several buildings and cars packed in the vicinity destroyed, with windows and ve-

hicles windscreens littering the whole area.

Charred human bodies also littered the area.

Human parts like heads, hands and legs were scattered in different directions.

Several people who sustained

different degrees of burns were rushed to Rekiya Hospital at Magagin Gari and St. Gerald Catholic Hospital, Kakuri.

Dr. Mohammed Bello of the Rekiya Hospital confirmed that victims were brought in, adding that they were in critical condition.

Musa A. Lailah, Acting Zonal Coordinator of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), North West zone, who led the rescue team to the scene, said "reports reached us that there was a bomb explosion and I contacted all the

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Assad says only a "crazy" leader kills his own people

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has denied ordering his troops to kill peaceful demonstrators, telling the U.S. television channel ABC that only a "crazy" leader kills his own people. Assad is under mounting international pressure, including a threat of sanctions from the Arab League.

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Politics

How Suswam, Benue PDP stole my mandate —Ughui

Actually, I ran for the April 2011 governorship election on the platform of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) in Benue State. Before that I was and still a professor of Marketing and Entrepreneurship at California State University in the United States of America. I took an unpaid leave of absence about a year ago to come back to Benue on a rescue mission, spearheaded by first, the Almighty God, the good people of Benue and my very good friends, including the current Minority Leader of the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr. George Akume, former Senate President, Dr. Iyorchia Ayu, and lots of other friends who prevailed upon me on the need to come back and participate in rescuing Benue State.

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Sports

Age falsification: Ekeji blames football administrators

News

17 killed, many wounded in Kaduna explosion

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stakeholders, the Red Cross, Civil Defence, FRSC, and we ran here to provide the needed assistance.

"As at now, we don't know the number of casualties but I can assure you that there are some people died."

Leader of the Red Cross Society and his team confirmed to newsmen at the scene that seven bodies have been recovered.

However, two different accounts were given as to what actually led to the explosion.

According to one Abdulwahid Awoniyi, two men came to the area on a motorbike parked in front of one of the shops and started asking for the address of the place.

He said it was while the shop owner was answering them that a bag they were carrying exploded and brought down the whole building.

The report was also partly corroborated by another witness, Emeka Udoji.

According to him, the two men on motorbike came in front of one of the shops and threw a bag into one of the shops which immediately exploded.

He said one of the attackers was immediately killed while the other suffered severe burns from the explosion.

Sunday Anyigbobu, a shop owner who escaped the blast by the whiskers, said: "I just heard a sound, and I kept my hands on my head and the whole ceiling fell on me but I managed to escape."

"I can confirm the death of three people, one Igbo and two Hausa people living inside the compound. The Igbo man's name is Ebuka."

Another eyewitness, James

Eke, narrated his experience: "We were standing this morning discussing until we heard a sound, I had to crawl to escape. We were five and the other four died instantly."

But the Kaduna State Police Commissioner, Ballah Nasarawa, who immediately came to the scene said, "It is a sad incident; as at now we are not suspecting any foul play, you can see that the fire is still burning but if you observe, it is where they sell batteries and gas, so we are suspecting that it is an explosion from within not sabotage from outside."

"As at now, there are casualties but I cannot give you certain numbers until after investigations."

On his part, Coordinator of Operation Yaki in the state, Dangana Mamman, a retired army Colonel, said: "We need to be very careful ourselves; we must make sure that we comb our environment personally."

"Like what has happened now, it is from somebody's shop. He came in the morning, opened his shop and this thing happened."

"I cannot imagine that somebody threw something. The allegation that people came on a bike is still an allegation yet to be confirmed."

"This thing was inside the shop, the explosion came from the shop. It is an explosion I can confirm," he said.

Media aide to Kaduna State Governor, Reuben Buhari, who also reacted to the blast said "it was a cylinder of gas that exploded and more so the shop owner, we understand was selling motor batteries."

"But we are appealing to people in the state to remain calm, as security agencies are on top of the situation."

But many of the traders debunked the gas cylinder story. Fabian Ozochukwu, who was devastated by the blast, said "one of the boys on the bike had his body burnt and ran down there. I don't know whether he died or not, I cannot tell."

"There are two people on top of a bike; I was outside chatting and they were carrying something and that something they were carrying exploded more than five times."

"There were about four or five generators around there so immediately the thing exploded, the generators exploded also. They were passing and the thing exploded on the bike."

Kaduna State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Aminu Lawan, said "people in the area are selling battery and gas but as at now they are unable to say exactly what happened."

Aminu said the police anti-bomb squad is already on ground, combing the area and that investigation was already on to ascertain what actually transpired.

The blast mainly affected Igbo and Yoruba traders who own shops in the area and it took the combined effort of the security operatives deployed to the place to calm the boys.

Eze Igbo-elect in Kaduna, Sylvanus Aneke, visited the scene of the blast and addressed the Igbo community, calling on them to remain calm and law abiding.

He assured that the government would come to their aid.

He said the incident was not targeted at the Igbo but on the people of Kaduna State in general.

Aneke condemned the act, saying the perpetrators should understand that they are all Nigerians and that whatever their grievances are, taking the law

into their hands will not solve the problem.

Also, in Maiduguri, an Inspector of Police with the Borno State Police Command, Muhammed Hanen, was reportedly attacked and killed by unknown gunmen suspected to be Boko Haram members on Wednesday.

He was said to have been killed by the gang of about three members, who laid ambush while he was returning from night duty close to Gwange Police Station where he was serving.

This was coming on the heels of unconfirmed stories that some members of Boko Haram were fished out among the police recruits currently undergoing training at the Police College, Maiduguri.

However, neither the state police command nor the college was forthcoming in confirming the story.

State Police Commissioner, Simeone Midenda, said the late Inspector Hanen was attacked when he closed from night duty and was returning to his house unarmed.

Although he could not exactly confirm if Hanen's killers were members of the Boko Haram sect, he said their mode of attack suggested so.

Daily Independent observed that although the cases of bomb blasts had declined in Maiduguri, the targeted killings of both security personnel and civilians continue almost on daily basis. The Boko Haram last week warned that it would sustain its hostilities.

Reacting to the blast, National President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Ayo Oritsejafor, urged the police authorities to get to the bottom of the violence.

He believes that the security agencies must now rise above religious, ethnic and other primordial sentiments to demonstrate their neutrality to the whole world.

"I have continued to urge the elite in the North to ensure that the regime of uncertainty is put behind us so that the country can forge ahead to harness its huge potentials for the benefit of the generations yet unborn," Oritsejafor said.

The CAN president, who was in the Kwara State capital, Ilorin, for the second quarterly meeting of Nigeria Inter-Religious Council meeting on Tuesday, aligned himself with the position of the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto, Matthew Hassan Kukah, and the Arewa Youths Forum who lampooned the Northern leaders over their roles in the under-development of the region.

According to him, "The problem with this country is that, people are often ready to mouth their commitment to peaceful resolution of the multi-faceted problems in the country while their actions outside the glare of klieg lights is at variance with what they say."

"Day in day out people blatantly tell the whole world that the crises in the North is political and economic, but the target of the violence is always the Christian folk."

"Can't we co-exist in a country given to us by God Almighty? I think the elite class in that part of the nation must stand up to admit that there is the urgent need for them to honestly address these issues frontally," he stated.

Oritsejafor charged Northern leaders to embrace peace for the country's sake.

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