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Bomb kills 20 at Abuja UN House

By [Yusuf Alli and Bukola Amusan](#). 27/08/2011 01:48:00

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Bomb kills 20 at Abuja UN House

There were strong indications that about **20** people were killed yesterday in a **suicide bomb** explosion at the UN Building in **Abuja**.

Also, as at press time, 68 others were injured, although the blast affected 275 people.

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), however, officially confirmed five dead and **20** injured as at 4pm.

NEMA had not updated its figures as at press time.

But the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, who admitted that the casualty figures could be “considerable,” has sent the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro, to Nigeria.

Many staff of the UN were still trapped in the devastated building.

The fate of about **20** babies in a crèche inside the building was uncertain as at press time.

The UN Building in **Abuja** is one of the most secured public places in the country, fuelling anxiety that some terrorists might have been at work.

Investigation by The Nation showed that a **suicide** bomber had broken through the two electronically controlled gates leading to the UN Building at about 10.20am and crashed into the basement where the explosives were detonated.

While some staff claimed that the **suicide** bomber crashed into the UN office in an Honda Car, others said they suspected that he used a truck.

But the bomber, who evaded security, took advantage of the rains at the time to strike.

Apart from those killed at the ground floor and reception, the first floor of the building was the worst hit.

Some staff from different units were locked up in some meeting rooms on the first floor at the time of the blast.

A UN staff, who spoke with one of our correspondents, said: "I have a strong conviction that it was **suicide** bombing because a car broke the water tight security barriers when it was raining to hit at the ground floor of the building.

"If you look at the floor, you will see how the car was smothered into something like a box.

"Ordinarily, unless a vehicle is screened, you cannot pass through the security controlled gates."

A staff with UNICEF, Dr. Taroo Sema, whose white overall was drenched with blood, said: "I managed to survive, look at the blood all **over** my body. It is sad."

AUNFPA staff, Mrs. Kori Habeeb, who escaped by a whisker, said: "I really thank God for His mercy on us and other staff that survived. I had a close shave.

"I and my colleagues had a meeting on the First Floor. But when we got to the Meeting Room, we discovered that one of our staff was not around to be part of the session.

"We decided to return to our office on the Fourth Floor since the key staff was not around. Barely a minute into our office and as we were settling down, we heard a deafening explosion, and the roof of the building caved in on us.

"Some of us managed to escape through the back of the building. Others were not too lucky."

As at press time, mass screening of the UN Building by anti-**bomb** experts had started following

indications that more than 100 staff were still trapped.

Also, it was unclear what has become of the fate of some babies in the crèche inside the building. A staff of UN Women added: “I know we have a crèche in the building but I cannot tell you the actual number of babies or children on the roll there.”

Findings by our correspondents showed that the casualty figures overwhelmed the rescue teams to the extent that referral private hospitals were engaged by the Federal Government.

A reliable security source, who spoke in confidence, gave the details of the records available to some government agencies involved in the rescue operation.

The source said: “The blast occurred at about 1020 hours but rescued operation could not assume a full swing until about 10.29am.

“The number of vehicles involved has not been known, but the blast affected 275 people. Those injured were 68(46 males, 22 females) and they are receiving treatment in different hospitals.

“On the casualty rate, those killed by the blast were **20**, including 17 males and three females.

“But no item has been recovered which could provide clues. Security agencies are still screening the UN Building.”

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) yesterday confirmed that a **suicide** bomber was behind the blast which devastated the UN Building in **Abuja** .

The agency also said so far, five people had died in the incident and **20** injured. It released the details of how the **bomb** was detonated by the **suicide** bomber.

NEMA gave the statistics in a situation report on the explosion which was signed by its Head of Public

Relations Unit, Alhaji Yushau Shuaib.

The statement reads: “The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and other response agencies this morning responded to a devastating explosion from a vehicle laden with explosive devises.

“So far, some of the casualties, including the dead bodies and seriously injured victims, have been taken to hospitals.

“The full details and figures of the casualties from the incidence will be communicated as soon as relevant bodies confirm and authenticate same.

“NEMA officials at the site of the incident confirmed more than five deaths and **over 20** seriously injured. It happened around 9am to 10am.

“A **suicide** bomber drove past the first gate and second gate right into the reception before detonating. On arrival, many injured victim were taken to various hospitals.

“Search for likely dead bodies and survivals is still going on now.”

On how the explosion started, NEMA gave graphic details.

It added: “The UN Building in **Abuja** came under **attack** at about 11am (local time) when a suspected **suicide** bomber rode in a Honda Car laden with explosive rammed into the building.

“All the four floors of the building were affected. The car, which rammed into the lobby of the building, exploded immediately killing the suspected bomber instantly and almost everyone that was at the spot.

“The impact was hardly felt in the first, second and third floors of the building where some of the other persons were affected.

“NEMA’s rescue team immediately deployed to site and evacuated the victims using the ambulances to convey both the unconscious and deaths to the nearby National Hospital.

“Other rescue teams included the Red Cross, Civil Defence, Airforce, Police, Army and Navy, FCT Administrations, Federal Fire Services who all deployed their various ambulances.

“The Police **Bomb** Squad were deployed and they combed the area in case of any more explosives. More than **20** ambulances were mobilised to the scene of the blast. There was however official silence on the actual number of the dead, the injured and those rescued.

The UNFPA Representative in in Nigeria, Dr. Agathe Lawson, who said it was difficult to ascertain the number of casualties, claimed that the strike was a “painful and difficult experience.”

Top officials who visited the scene could not be of help. They included the Minister of Police Affairs, Navy Capt. Caleb Olubolade (rtd); the representative of the IGP, DIG Ivy Okoronkwo; the Minister of State for Health, Dr. Ali Pate; the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Prof. Viola Onwuliri; and the Minister of State for the FCT, and Oloye Jumoke Akinjide.

Briefing the Minister of State for Health, the UNFPA Representative in Nigeria, Dr. Agathe Lawson, said: “We cannot say the actual number of the dead or those injured. But I will get in touch with you later.”

Some of the hospitals where the victims were taken to include the National Hospital, Wuse General Hospital, Federal Staff Hospital, **Abuja** Clinics and Kelina Clinic.

While addressing the UN staff, the UNFPA Representative in Nigeria, Dr. Agathe Lawson, said: “This is a painful and difficult situation for us. We have definitely lost some security officials, some staff but I

plead with all of you to be united and strong at this critical period. We will communicate with you on every step being taken.”

There was tension however **over** the alleged recovery of the number plate of the car of the **suicide** bomber by the FRSC. The said number is tagged Kano AV 38 NSR.

Another source added: “Security agencies are already looking into the number plate found at the scene of the blast. It is too early to comment.”

As at the time of filing this report, the census of UN Staff was still in progress.

A staff of the UN Systems in Nigeria , Mr. Bello Ademola was sighted taking a roll call of staff.

In a statement on the blast, the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon said although the casualty figures might be considerable, none of the victims will be abandoned.

The statement said: “Around 11 o’clock this morning, local time, the United Nations House in the Nigerian capital, **Abuja**, was struck by a car **bomb**.

”These buildings house 26 humanitarian and development agencies of the United Nations family. This was an assault on those who devote their lives to helping others.

“We condemn this terrible act, utterly. We do not yet have precise casualty figures but they are likely to be considerable. A number of people are dead; many more are wounded.

“Nigerian and international search and rescue teams have mobilised and are moving the wounded to hospitals and providing emergency aid.

”I am asking the Deputy UN Secretary-General, Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro, (to go) to Nigeria immediately and I am mobilising the UN system to respond to this emergency. She will be accompanied by the UN

security chief, Under-Secretary-General Gregory Starr, and meet with Nigerian authorities upon arrival in **Abuja** .

"I am going to call President (Goodluck) Jonathan of Nigeria soon.

"On this very sad occasion, I extend my deepest sympathies to the victims and their families. The United Nations will undertake every possible effort to assist them during this difficult time."

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hahaha. nice one