

Bombs kill 15 in Bauchi churches

TWO churches in Bauchi State were yesterday hit by bombs, which killed 15 people and injured 42 others.

The government deployed the military, the police and other security agencies to the scene of the blast.

The churches affected were Living Faith and Harvest Field, both located in the Yelwa Tudu area of the Bauchi metropolis.

The Chairman of the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) in Bauchi, Alhaji Muhammed Inuwa Bello, said the incident occurred between 9am and 9.30am.

He said: "We experienced a bomb explosion at Living Faith Church in Yelwa Tudu, which is about 10 to 12 kilometres to Bauchi, the state capital.

"From the account at our disposal, the bomb explosion occurred when some worshippers were coming out of the church. The car involved in the explosion attempted to hit the church but it could not get to the building.

"The car rammed into the entrance leading into an instant bomb explosion. Cars parked within the premises of the church got engulfed.

"We have so far retrieved 15 corpses. 42 injured have been evacuated to Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Teaching Hospital in Bauchi."

Bello, who said the mopping operation was continuing at press time, confirmed that the Army and other security agencies had been deployed in the area.

He added: "We are trying as much as possible to attend to those injured in the blast and all hands are on deck to save them."

Another source, who gave an insight into the explosion, said: "We suspected that a neat Honda car was used for the dastardly act by the bomber.

He said some of them suffered high degree of burns

From Yusuf Alli, Managing Editor, Northern Operation and Austine Tsenzughul Bauchi

as a result of the impact of the explosion.

He said: "The attack was targeted at a period the first set of worshippers was leaving. Most of them were caught unawares as they were exchanging pleasantries.

"The security was tight at the church but the suicide bomber defied the barricades to wreak havoc. Expectedly, the suicide bomber died alongside some security guards and other volunteers in the church premises.

"The death toll could be higher than 15 given by SEMA. Most people are still looking for their relations."

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), through its spokesman Yushau Shuaib, said: "NEMA has confirmed an explosion in Yelwa Tudu community in Bauchi State. Since NEMA does not have an office in the state, it mobilises response agencies to the scene for rescue and intervention."

A security source said: "Given the religious configuration of Bauchi, we have so far beefed up security in the area because of likely reprisal attacks

"Anti-bomb experts have also been deployed in the scene of the blast for preliminary investigation."

Recounting the incident in an interview with NAN, a Living Faith Church pastor, Mr. Johnson Elogu, said the suicide bomber forced his car into a group of worshippers.

He said: "At about 9.20 in the morning when those who attended the first service came out of the church, we heard a blast that shook the entire church building.

"People started running helter-skelter for their lives. I managed to come out only to discover that it was a case of suicide bombing.

"Several persons died while others were seriously injured and had been taken to the hospital."

The pastor stated that the casualty figure was yet to be ascertained, but that the corpses were taken to the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Teaching Hospital, Bauchi, alongside the injured.

Sources at the hospital's morgue who requested anonymity confirmed that corpses were deposited at the facility from the explosion site but did not state the figure.

A Red Cross official, who spoke at the teaching Hospital mortuary, said: "We have moved in 16 corpses. And from what I have seen so far, there are about 40 others with various degrees of injuries. You can confirm from my colleagues from the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC), who have been helping in bringing out the bodies"

About 40 others, with various degrees of injuries were being treated and given beds in the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Teaching Hospital (ATBUTH), Bauchi.

Harvest Field Church is 25 meters away from the Living Faith Church, which, according to the Police, was the main target of the suicide bomber

Bauchi Police Commissioner Mohammed Ladan told reporters that nine people so far have been confirmed dead and 27 are presently receiving treatment at the ATBUTH.

Ladan said: "On June 2, 2012, sustained joint internal security intelligence revealed that there will be multiple attacks on churches within Bauchi metropolis. And it was based on the intelligence reports that security personnel were deployed in likely targets. The Living Faith Church in Yelwa was among them."

The police chief explained that "the suicide bomber, who came in a Honda Civic car attempted to force his way in