

120 feared dead in Kano central mosque triple explosions



The Central Mosque located within the Emir's Palace in Kano witnessed a major tragedy yesterday as triple bomb attacks by the Boko Haram sect left no fewer than 120 worshippers dead.

Bloodstains, mangled bodies and charred wreckage of vehicles and motorcycles characterised the mosque after the incident that has recorded the highest death toll since the sect launched its attacks on the nation.

The larger metropolis was left to mourn the scores of worshippers feared to have been killed in the triple bomb explosions which occurred midway into the weekly Juma'at prayers.

About 128 other worshippers were believed to have been injured.

A similar bomb attack by the same sect was averted at the Customs Market, Gamboru, Maiduguri after vigilante youths alerted the police about two Improvised Explosive Devices planted at the market.

The Northern States Governors Forum (NSGF) deplored the attack which came a week after the Emir of Kano, Alhaji Muhammadu Sanusi II challenged Northerners to resist Boko Haram.

The Emir, who sometimes leads worshippers in prayers at the mosque, was out of town yesterday.

The Northern Governors said that the security challenge in the North has taken a turn for the worse as no one, including traditional rulers, is spared by the insurgents.

The Chief Imam of Kano, Prof Sani Zaharadeen, was in the process of delivering his sermon at about 2.15 pm when the bombs began to go off one after the other.

Two of the bombs were planted inside the mosque and the other outside.

"Three bombs were planted in the courtyard to the mosque and they went off simultaneously," a security source who declined to be named said.

A staff member at the palace who also witnessed the attack said: "After multiple explosions, they also opened fire. I cannot tell you the casualty figure because we all ran away."

Angry youths blocked the mosque's gates to the police, who had to disperse them with tear gas to gain entry.

No official casualty figure was immediately available but sources involved in evacuating victims said between 65 and 100 people might have lost their lives.

Deputy Police Public Relations Officer in the state, ASP Abubakar Mustapha, said on the phone that the police were yet to ascertain the casualty figure.

Governor Rabi'u Kwankwaso was out of town as were Police Commissioner Adenrele Shinaba and the Police Public Relations officer, Musa Magaji Majia, both of whom were said to have travelled to Dubai to collect awards as the best Police Commissioner and best PPRO in Nigeria respectively.

The Force Headquarters said the attack was carried out by suicide bombers.

The explosions sparked a stampede by terrified worshippers.

The sky immediately turned black against the background of the smoke emitted by the explosions.

The sight of so many dead bodies seemed to have provoked the people who started hauling stones at security agents who arrived the scene soon after the incident.

They cordoned off the area as a prelude to the commencement of investigation into the incident and evacuation of the wounded to the hospital and the dead to the mortuary.

The Boko Haram insurgency has displaced over one million people during its campaign the Red Cross said yesterday, an increase on a September U.N. refugee agency estimate of 700,000.

Islamic leaders sometimes shy away from direct criticism of Boko Haram for fear of reprisals. But Sanusi, angered by atrocities such as the kidnapping of 200 schoolgirls from Chibok in April, has been increasingly vocal.

He was quoted last week as saying: "These people, when they attack towns, they kill boys and enslave girls. People must stand resolute ... They should acquire what they can to defend themselves. People must not wait for soldiers to protect them."

The immediate past Emir of Kano, Alhaji Ado Bayero, was ambushed by Boko Haram insurgents in early 2013.

He narrowly escaped death in the incident.

An official of one of the rescue agencies said 64 bodies had been brought to just one Kano area hospital after the attack and the wounded figure reflected statistics from three hospitals.

Force Headquarters spokesman, Mr. Emmanuel Ojukwu, said yesterday that the attack was carried out by two suicide bombers and gunmen who opened fire on people trying to flee to safety.

After the assailants blew themselves up in succession at the Grand Mosque in Kano, "gunmen opened fire on those who were trying to escape," Ojukwu told AFP.

The Deputy Governor of Kano State, Dr Abdullahi Ganduje, commiserated with the families of those who died in the blasts.

Ganduje, who described the incident as very unfortunate, prayed for the quick recovery of those who sustained injuries in the blasts.

The deputy governor called on the people of the state to continue to pray to God to prevent future occurrence.

“It is unfortunate that the ugly incident is happening when the state has started enjoying relative peace.

“We should continue to pray for the sustenance of peace in our state and the country at large,” he said.