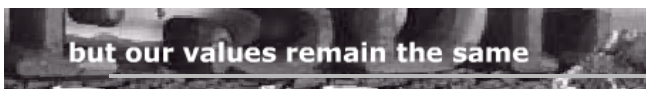




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NASS election eve bomb blast kills 25 in Suleja

By Mike Odiegwu, Yenagoa, Niyi Odebo and Emeka

Ezekiel, Abuja

Friday, 8 Apr 2011

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Chairman of INEC, Prof. Attahiru Jega

No fewer than 25 persons, mostly National Youth Service Corps members, were feared dead and several others seriously injured after a bomb explosion rocked Suleja Local Government Area, Niger State, on Friday.

The event created panic in the entire state ahead of today's rescheduled National Assembly election.

The incident occurred at the Suleja office of the Independent National Electoral Commission at about 5.30 pm.

Bombs had exploded on March 3, 2011 at a rally organised by the Peoples Democratic Party at the Government Secondary School, Suleja, killing several people and injuring many others.

A bomb scare had also rattled another PDP rally at Sarkin Pawa, Suleja LGA as people abandoned Governor Babangida Aliyu's event and ran to safety.

SATURDAY PUNCH gathered that the INEC office located at Kumba area of Suleja, where Friday's blast occurred, was a beehive of activities as officials of the commission and ad hoc employees consisting mainly of youth corps members were getting ready for today's election.

The corps members were reportedly checking a list containing their areas of assignment when the explosion happened.

A source told our correspondent that there was a loud blast, which threw some people up and created a thick ball of smoke.

The source, who identified himself as Mallam Bisala Baba-Sule, said, "When the bomb exploded, most of the victims were dismembered and their bodies littered the office complex. I saw people with their hands cut off and their bodies charred."

It was gathered that most of the corps members, who were caught unawares by the explosion, were not killed instantly by the blast.

They were said to have died after much groaning and writhing in pains because they could not get urgent medical assistance from onlookers, who reportedly maintained a reasonable distance from the scene of the

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incident.

The police reportedly fled the scene to join others, who were not ready to move close to render assistance.

Our correspondent gathered that those who escaped the blast were panic-stricken and could not immediately go back to the scene of the incident to assist the victims.

Those residing close to the INEC office and others doing business in the area were said to have fled to safety, abandoning their homes and shops.

It was gathered that the injured victims were later taken to the Suleja General Hospital and other private hospitals in the town for treatment.

The source said he saw bodies of both the dead and the injured litter the premises of the Suleja General Hospital with a few medical personnel on hand to attend to them.

It was gathered that many residents of Minna, the state capital, had become apprehensive of the security situation in the state.

Many people were seen in clusters folding their hands and discussing the incident.

It was learnt that the state headquarters of INEC at David Mark Road was immediately deserted as workers and other corps members abandoned their duty posts and fled for the fear of another explosion.

The incident was said to have rendered the Resident Electoral Commissioner, Dr. Emmanuel Onucheyo, speechless.

Onucheyo, however, was not disposed to speaking to our correspondent as he refused to answer calls to his cell-phone.

But the governor of the state, Dr. Babangida Aliyu, condemned the incident, saying it was unfortunate that people had resorted to violence instead of playing the political game by the rules.

Aliyu, who spoke through his Director-General, Media and Publicity, Alhaji Abdulkadir Baba, offered to offset the bills of the victims in the hospitals.

He, however, called on the people not to be discouraged by the blast, asking them to come out en masse to cast their votes today.

In his initial reaction, Mr. Kayode Idowu, the spokesman of INEC chairman, Prof. Attahiru Jega, said, "We have received news of a blast in one of our offices. We're in touch with security agencies trying to get the details of what happened."

The spokesman for the National Emergency Management Agency, Mr. Yishau Shaibu, said, "Some people were seriously injured. The situation is horrific. Because of the high number of casualties, the NEMA Director-General has ordered that those who can't be treated in Suleja be transferred to Abuja hospitals."

When an alliance is no longer worth it
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Comments :

- My condolence goes out to the family of the deceased corp members.may the almighty God give the parents and relative the fortitude to bear the loss.It is really wicked to see several wicked Acts displayed daily in this country,when we think a "BAD" event will be the last,then something else crop up within the country from another region.Let put our hands on deck to ensure that we change every form of governance that we desist.let us create the changes Nigeria need today.

Posted by: Tunde Ola , on Saturday, April 09, 2011

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- The bomb blast is disheartening, barbaric and inhuman. Now Nigeria is turning into Pakistan or Afghanistan.This indicates the extent of security lapses in Nigeria. Killing innocent corps serving their father land is not a proper way to express electoral grievances or political differences. The wrath of God awaits the perpetrators of this crime.

Posted by: Asiruwa Peter , on Saturday, April 09, 2011

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- There is a need to effectively work on our emergency response. Some corpors died because there was no rapid response to meet their helpless needs.

Posted by: Akanji Oluwafemi , on Saturday, April 09, 2011

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