

Boko Haram: Death toll rises to five in fresh attack

•Calls for amnesty unnecessary —Sagay

THE death toll in Sunday's Boko Haram militants attack at a relaxation centre in Gomari, Maiduguri, has risen to five.

Two unidentified victims had died on Sunday after the attack, while five others, who suffered gunshot injuries were rushed to the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital.

A senior officer at the hospital told the *Neus Agency of Nigeria* that three of the injured victims died in the early hours of Monday.

He said two other victims were still lying critically ill at the emergency unit of the hospital.

The Police Public Relations Officer in the state command, Mallam Lawal Abdullahi, who declined comment on the issue, referred NAN to the military authorities.

Malam Abubakar Abdullahi, the Spokesman of the 21 Armoured Brigade, also refused to comment, saying that the issue was purely civil.

In another attack, Boko Haram on Monday killed a nurse, who was playing cards in Maiduguri and wounded four others in the shooting at a bus stop in the city.

The AFP reported that the gunmen were targeting a policeman, who reportedly played cards at the bus stop, but he was not there at the time.

Suspected Boko Haram militants had attacked the relaxation centre at about 8pm on motorbikes.

Meanwhile, some Nigerians on Monday condemned the call for amnesty for the members of the Boko Haram sect which last Thursday claimed it bombed the Nigeria Police Headquarters in Abuja.

NAN reports that some political parties and concerned bodies were of

the view that the Federal Government should negotiate with members of the sect instead of a crackdown.

Meanwhile, a constitutional lawyer, Prof. Itse Sagay, and Executive Director of Access to Justice, Mr. Joseph Oteh, a human rights group-- in separate interviews with NAN, condemned any call for amnesty.

Sagay said it was shocking that people were asking the Federal Government to grant amnesty to a terrorist group.

"I am very shocked about the proposal that they want the government to grant amnesty to terrorists who have no restraints or limits to the amount of destruction

they can cause.

"Do you negotiate with Al-Qeada? These people are like Al-Qeada and you cannot talk to them. Their cause is mad and they are not rational," he said.

According to Sagay, it is impossible to negotiate with the likes of Boko Haram because they are living contradictions to the cause they claim they are fighting for.

"These people are using bombs and vehicles made from Western education knowledge to carry out their attacks and yet they claim that they are fighting against Western education," he said.

FG taking steps to improve national security — Jonathan

Ihuoma Chiedozie,
Abuja

PRESIDENT Goodluck Jonathan on Monday said the Federal Government was taking steps to strengthen national security.

The President said this while responding to commiseration on the bomb blast at the Nigeria Police Headquarters, Abuja from members of the family of the late Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Nigeria's first post-independence Prime Minister, who paid him a visit in Abuja.

Jonathan said the explosion was an act of terror, which had become a global trend, but assured that he was taking steps to ensure the safety of all Nigerians.

He noted that no incident should be overlooked, no matter the circumstances or location of its occurrence.

Jonathan welcomed the appreciation expressed by the Balewa family for naming the new Ministry of Foreign

Affairs building after the late prime minister, adding that it was not an accident, but a "recognition of his contribution as Nigeria's first foreign minister and to the development of Nigeria as its first Premier."

Advising the family on their plan to establish a foundation in memory of their father, the President said they should ensure the appointment of people of integrity who would keep the good name of the late prime minister alive.

He said the late Balewa's mausoleum would be upgraded to serve as a suitable tourist attraction for visiting foreign leaders and other visitors.

Earlier, Mal. Yakubu Tafawa-Balewa, a member of the family, had expressed appreciation to Jonathan for naming the new ministry of foreign affairs building after their father while commiserated with the President for the bomb blast at the Nigeria Police headquarters last week.