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Blasts kill 150 in Jos market

MAY 21, 2014 BY JUDE OWUAMANAM, EVEREST AMAEFULE AND OLALEKAN ADETAYO WITH AGENCY REPORTS

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Scene of the Jos market explosions... on Tuesday

| credits: Jerome StJerome

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▶ Last month, they abducted over 200 schoolgirls in Borno State; on Thursday, they attacked two schools in Bauchi State; on Sunday, they bombed Kano city. Today (Tuesday), it is the turn of Jos again. God where are we heading for in Nigeria?"

These were the words of a trader in the ever-busy Jos Terminus Market where twin bomb blasts occurred on Tuesday.

The trader, who gave his name simply as James, said he was lucky to have survived with minor injuries but vowed to relocate his family from Jos where he had lived for two decades.

James was indeed lucky as eyewitnesses said that over 150 people lost their lives to the blasts.

The *Cable News Network* however reported a third explosion in Abuja Market in Jos where shoes are sold. It however did not give details.

Although eyewitnesses account put the death toll at 150, the state Commissioner of Police, Mr. Chris Olakpe, said that 46 people were killed while 45 others were wounded.

The first bomb, which was said to have been detonated by a suicide bomber in a *Fiat* car, happened at about 3pm when the market was at its height. The second blast occurred from a *Toyota Sienna* about 20 metres from the scene of the first.

One of the eyewitnesses said the bomber in the *Fiat* car stopped it abruptly along the busy Muritala Mohammed Way which is very close to the old site of the Jos University Teaching Hospital.

He was said to have left the car for minutes to cause enough traffic build-up before he returned and detonated the explosives in it. The explosion was heard all over Jos and Bukuru metropolis.

However as people gathered to assist victims, some hoodlums started looting and burning cars. In the course of their action, some youths noticed the *Toyota Sienna* parked at some distance and went for it.

While trying to vandalise it, one of them put a light under the Sienna and immediately it exploded, killing nearly all those in the vicinity.

There was pandemonium all over the market as traders scrambled to close shops. Cars that tried to make a quick U-turn were trapped and many were burnt.

One of the eyewitnesses, who simply identified himself as Suleiman, told our correspondent in Jos that he was one of the few people that arrived at the scene and started helping the victims.

Suleiman whose clothes were blood-stained said that for more than 20 minutes after the blasts, there was no security presence.

He claimed that the policemen attached to a police post inside the market took to their heels when the first bomb went off.

"I was in the place when the first explosion happened. I ran to the place and there was no security around to assist. Immediately, I and two other people started to help those injured.

The fire from the blast could not allow us to go near and help more people. It was terrible; I have never seen such a thing."

Another eyewitness, Peter Amine, said, "We were inside the market when I heard a loud explosion at about 3.28pm. Before I knew what happened, a piece of metal landed very close to my legs.

He added that a thick dark smoke engulfed the scene, thus compounding the already chaotic situation as fear-stricken people, some covered with blood, screamed and ran for safety

A NewYork, United States -Based Nigerian news portal, *Sahara Reporters*, said the bombs, were primed to inflict maximum casualties.

Olakpe, however, told journalists that the casualty figure he gave was not definite as there were possibilities of it increasing.

He said that the figure was obtained from the Plateau Specialist Hospital, and the Bingham University Teaching Hospital where most of the victims were taken to.

The police commissioner said, "At about 3 pm, I was in my office when I heard a loud explosion around the Terminus area. I immediately mobilised and moved to the area and just about 20 minutes later, the second explosion went off.

Olakpe said that one of the lessons to be learnt from the incident was that people should not rush to the site of a bomb blast as there was the likelihood of another .

He added that the police had commenced what he called a "post-blast investigation" and appealed to the traders in the market to stay away for a while so as not to jeopardise the probe.

Jonathan says perpetrators cruel, evil

President Goodluck Jonathan has condemned the bomb blasts, saying the perpetrators were cruel and evil.

In a statement by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Dr. Reuben Abati, the President also directed all relevant agencies to mobilise support and relief efforts in aid of the victims.

Abati said, "The President extends his heartfelt sympathies to the affected families and persons. He assures all Nigerians that government remains fully committed to winning the war against terror, and this administration will not be cowed by the atrocities of enemies of human progress and civilisation."

The Plateau State Commissioner for Information and Communication, Mrs. Olivia Dazem, however, said the state government regretted the incident and called for calm among the residents of the state.

Jonathan has also ordered the deployment of more troops in the North-East to aid the search for the abducted schoolgirls.

The Director-General of the National Orientation Agency who coordinates the National Information Centre, Mr. Mike Omeri, disclosed this at a news conference in Abuja on Tuesday.

He also said that the structures for the operation of the forces from foreign nations had been put in place.

Omeri said, "I wish to inform you that President Jonathan has ordered the deployment of additional troops to reinforce the ongoing military operations in the North-East.

"This action comes in the wake of the regional alliance to checkmate the activities of Boko Haram in the zone and also goes to strengthen the President's avowed resolve to rescue the girls and his commitment to providing total security for all Nigerians.

"Meanwhile, the structures for the coordination of the activities of the input of the allied forces in the ongoing search and rescue operations have been set up, awaiting take off any moment from now.

"Just before we came here, we got information that two explosions occurred in the Central Area of Jos. The police and other security agencies in the state have mobilised to site."

Nigeria asks UN to blacklist B' Haram

Meanwhile, Nigeria has formally asked the United Nations Security Council al Qaeda Sanctions Committee to blacklist Boko Haram for the kidnapping schoolgirls .

If there is no objection by the 15-member council committee, which operates by consensus, Boko Haram will be sanctioned, the council diplomats told *Reuters* on Tuesday.

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