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Nigeria: Suicide Bombers Hit Another Church in Jos

BY AHAMEFULA OGBU AND SERIKI ADINOYI, 12 MARCH 2012

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Another Sunday, another suicide bomb attack. Just as Plateau State was beginning to recover from a recent attack on Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN), at least nine persons, including two suspected suicide bombers, were killed Sunday at St. Finbarr's Catholic Church, Jos, in yet another bombing.

The irony further played itself out sharply - while Governor Jonah Jang worships at COCIN, his former deputy, Mrs Pauline Tallen, worships at St. Finbarr's.

President Goodluck Jonathan promptly condemned the bombing, asking Nigerians not to despair over fresh attacks in spite of the gains made against the group and assured all that government was winning the war on terror.

This was as Vice-President Namadi Sambo entered into a closed-door meeting with Northern governors to find a lasting solution to insecurity in that part of the country.

St. Finbarr's is in the neighbourhood of the headquarters of Plateau Radio/Television Corporation (PRTVC), Rayfield.

An eye witness, Emmanuel Audu, who described the effects of the blast as "damaging", said at least 15 others were injured and were rushed to the Air Force Military Hospital, Plateau Specialist Hospital and the Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH). About 15 cars were also damaged.

Audu said at about 10.45am, when the second mass had just begun, two suspected suicide bombers arrived the gate of the church in a Volkswagen Jetta car led by two motorcyclists.

"They were stopped by the Boys Scout and other security men at the church's gate for a check. But the bombers refused. And in a space of two minutes, as the church's security men argued with them, the bomb went off, killing the two bombers in the car, the two Okada riders, three Scouts and two other members of the church," he said.

Two other youths were also allegedly shot by soldiers while they protested the explosion, but are currently recuperating at JUTH.

But the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has said only three persons died in the attack.

Another member of the church, Mr. Dung Nyam, who is currently on admission at the state specialist hospital, said the impact of the bomb threw him up high in the air, and as he landed, he became unconscious, only to wake up and find himself in the hospital.

The security operatives drafted to the scene had it tough as the irate youths hauled stones at them.

Angry youths of the church and other youths of the area barricaded the network of roads around the church burning tyres and attacking commercial motorcyclists believed to be of Hausa extraction.

At least six motorcycles were still in flames on the streets when THISDAY got to the scene.

While the policemen retreated, the soldiers bulldozed their way through, shooting into the air during which the two persons were allegedly killed.

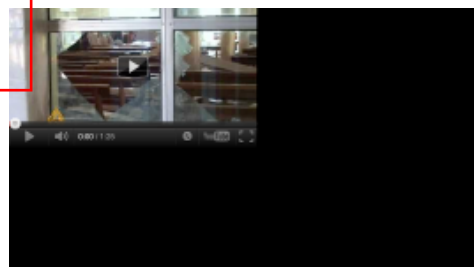
The Parish Priest, Reverend Father Peter Umorin, said the second mass had just begun barely 10 minutes when the bomb went off. He said he was quickly led out of the church to safety by some members of the church.

The Catholic Archbishop of Jos Diocese, Ignatius Kaigama, said the church was amazed at the level of persecution it was currently going through, but added that it would not be deterred by it.

He urged the youths not to take the law into their hands, saying righteousness would certainly prevail over evil.

Meanwhile, Jang has visited the scene, appealing for restraint and vigilance on the part of the people. The governor, who spoke in Hausa, promised that all would be done to track down those behind the act.

Also condemning the blast, the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Professor Shedrack Best, pacified the people of the state, urging them to be law-abiding in



Anger is growing in central Nigeria, as attacks become a weekly occurrence in several states in the region. (Resource: Deaths After Bomb Blast at Nigerian Church

the face of the provocation.

The Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Samuel Dabai, said the irate youths did not allow the police to get to the scene to assess the level of casualty, adding that investigation was on.

President Jonathan said security agencies were on the verge of uprooting the menace through massive arrests which would soon unravel their sponsors.

He asked the people to desist from taking laws into their own hands through reprisals as government was doing all it could to protect all citizens and foreigners in the country.

In a statement by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Dr. Reuben Abati, the president commiserated with the families of those killed in the blast, the church and state government.

"President Jonathan reiterates his administration's total condemnation of this and all other terrorist attacks on innocent Nigerians and reassures all Nigerians and friends of the country that the Federal Government is doing everything possible to end the spate of mindless attacks and killings in parts of the country.

"The President urges Nigerians not to despair or be discouraged by the persistence of the attacks in spite of government's efforts to deal decisively with the menace of terrorism within the country's borders because despite seeming appearances to the contrary, government is indeed winning the war against the terrorists and will continue to progressively destroy their ability to unleash murderous attacks on peaceful, law-abiding Nigerians.

"In this regard, it is worthy of note that in recent weeks national security agencies have identified and arrested more of these agents of darkness than at any other time. Their hideouts and modus operandi are also being consistently exposed.

"President Jonathan assures all Nigerians that government will continue to build on these recent successes by our security agencies until terrorism is totally defeated in the country with the support, cooperation and solidarity of all patriotic citizens.

"The President therefore calls on the populace to remain patient and refrain from taking matters into their own hands through actions such as reprisal attacks, as government continues to take the battle to the merchants of terror and close in on their locations, funding and sponsors," the statement said.

Sambo's meeting with the governors was classified as private and not for media coverage.

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