

BORNO: Death toll rises to 16, over 60 injured, as survivors recount ordeals

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...As FG moves to begin trial of 5,000 Boko Haram suspects

...Minister condemns attack

By Ndahi marama & Joseph Erunke

Victims of Borno Haram's attack on Maiduguri Tuesday night yesterday recounted their ordeals, as death toll rose to 16, with over 60 injured persons in hospitals receiving treatment.

This came as the Federal Government disclosed that it would soon begin trial of no fewer than 5,000 Boko Haram suspects.

Meanwhile, Governor Babagana Zulum early yesterday disclosed that 10 persons died in the attack, while 47 were injured but by noon, the death toll had risen to 16.

A survivor in Kaleri/Adam Kolo, one of the densely populated area affected by the attack in the metropolis, Alhaji Musa Kolomi, 71, said: "We were sitting just before magrib (evening) prayers, when we saw something (rocket) coming from a distance and it fell in the middle of the road. It tore the car that was parked there into pieces and those of us that were there got affected by the impact of the explosion.

"A man carrying a mat to go to the mosque got hit and his skull was opened and he died instantly. Then the rest of us sustained injuries. My leg was injured, while two boys hit in the head were rushed to University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital, UMTH."

Another survivor in Gwange, Abubakar Mohammed, said: "I was just standing in front of my house in Layin bori, near COCIN church, when something that looked like a rocket landed before me. There were several of us there, some of the people even got killed instantly."

Efforts to speak with some of the survivors receiving treatment in hospitals were unsuccessful as Vanguard's correspondent who visited two of the hospitals was not allowed in.

Most of the victims were in the emergency and intensive care units accessible only to health workers on duty call.

Governor Zulum during his empathy visits to the State Specialist Hospital, and the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital, both in Maiduguri earlier yesterday, had told journalists that 10 persons died in the attack, while 47 were injured.

The governor was told that some of the victims had sustained various degrees of injuries and were being treated, for which he directed the state ministry of health to take over their bills.

According to him, “Indeed it is a very sad moment for the people and government of Borno State, about 60 persons were affected, among them, 10 have died. It was as a result of long distance shots fired by the insurgents. I believe this is a new trend we have to rise up and stop it. We experienced a similar incident exactly one year ago. The solution is to deploy an appropriate technology, which we will have to work on. I share the pains of all those affected. We are not just visiting hospitals, we do so much behind the scene in our combined responses to the Boko Haram insurgency and we will keep making these and more efforts.”

On military’s recapturing of Marte, seized by Boko Haram’s terrorists few days ago, Governor Zulum said he was not just pleased, but optimistic that the Nigerian military would work hard to retain, continue its peace-building and stability efforts in ways that should ensure the insurgents never took Marte again, or any part of the state.

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“I am optimistic that the insurgents will not take over Marte again,” Zulum said.

Trial of 5,000 Boko Haram suspects

In the meantime, on the planned trial of Boko Haram suspects in detention facilities across the country, the Director General of Legal Aid Council, Aliyu Abubakar, disclosed the development during a courtesy visit to Borno Governor Babagana Zulum at the Government House, Maiduguri.

According to Abubakar, Giwa Barracks, Maiduguri, Kainji prisons were among facilities, where the suspects were being kept over alleged involvement in Boko Haram sect’s activities.

He said the trial would be conducted by the Office of the Attorney General of the Federation, Office of the National Security Advisers in collaboration with the Theater Command Operation Lafiya Dole, while the Legal Aid Council had been mandated to provide defence for the inmates.

According to him, the legal aid team had already interviewed 283 suspects as part of efforts to establish their involvement in terrorism as well understand the nature of the crime they committed.

Abubakar said “As their defence counsel, we have to interview them from time to time to enable us know their own part of the story. It so because regardless of the crimes they committed, it is possible that out of hundreds, you may find out that one or two persons are innocent.

“It is necessary for them to be represented by this council to make sure that all the requirements of the law are fulfilled. All evidence must be presented against them before the court of the law so that those found guilty would be prosecuted. In as much as everybody is aware of the nature of the crime they have committed, under our laws, they are innocent until proven guilty.”

Responding, Governor Zulum represented by his Deputy, said the government was ready to partner with the Federal Government to achieve its mandate and lauded the council for providing legal support to the people of the state.

Minister condemns attack

Reacting to the attack, Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, Sadiya Farouq, condemned the attacks on residents leading to several fatalities.

In a statement by her Special Assistant on Media, Nneka Ikem Anibeze, the Minister described insurgents ‘action as not only wicked and inhuman but also insensitive.

The statement read: “The Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, Sadiya Umar Farouq has condemned insurgent attacks on residents of Borno state which left 10 persons dead and 47 injured.

“Boko Haram insurgents fired rocket-propelled grenades shots from Kaleri on the outskirts of Maiduguri on Tuesday night.

“Two densely populated communities Gwange and Adam Kolo areas including a children’s playground were mostly hit by the grenade. I condemn in its entirety, the attacks on innocent residents of Gwange and Adam Kolo commutes.”

“The Humanitarian Ministry through its Agency NEMA is already working with SEMA to assess the extent of damage in the attacked communities for possible provision of

relief and non relief items.”

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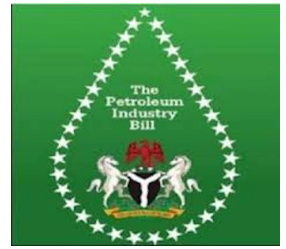
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