

NEWS

Death toll in Nasarawa bomb explosion rises to 56

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**•Cause of blast yet unknown****By David Odama**

The death toll in the bomb explosion which occurred on Tuesday night in Rukubi, a border area between Nasarawa and Benue Statesv has now risen to 56 while the cause of the blast was unknown.

A resident of Rukubi, Mallam Haruna Bawa who was at the scene of the bomb explosion said he counted more than 54 lifeless bodies, including four of his brothers who were affected.

In an interview with Saturday Vanguard in Lafia, Malam Bawa, who was also at Dalhatu Araf Specialist Hospital, Lafia to attend to his injured brother said he rushed to the scene of the explosion after hearing a loud noise accompanied by thick smoke from the area.

According to him, “some of the people who died in the attack were butchers who were invited to slaughter the cows that fell ill while in detention in order to avoid wasting the cows”.

The spokesperson of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, Tasi'u Suleman, said: "at least 54 people died instantly while the injured were many."

Another victim of the bomb explosion, Malam Usman Bawa, who was receiving medical treatment at the Dalhatu Araf Specialist Hospital, Lafia, said the attack was "unprovoked".

He recounted that residents of the area had come out in large numbers from their homes in Rukubi community to offload their cows on arrival from Benue State where the animals had been held for days as a result of violation of the state government's anti open-grazing laws.

According to Mallam Bawa, "some of them were bringing down the cows from the vehicle, others were preventing them from going to the stream to drink water, having not been fed for days".

Mallam Bawa, who sustained multiple injuries on different parts of his body, said the explosion shattered his legs but he was thankful to God for saving his life.

Yet another victim of the blast, Mallam Adamu Abdullahi, claimed that he lost three of his friends who had accompanied him to the area to receive the cows while he escaped with a broken arm and deep cuts in his stomach and other parts of his body.

According to him, "it was not clear if it was an airstrike or whether the explosion came from a bomb or other explosive devices that had been planted in the vehicle that conveyed the cows.

The victims called on the federal government to set up an independent investigative panel to unravel the circumstances surrounding the blast adding that the perpetrators of the deadly act should be made to face justice.

Many of the survivors of the bomb explosion were on admission at a private facility while others were taken to Dalhatu Araf Specialist Hospital in Lafia where two more victims later died.