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TANZANIA | Catholic Cathedral Bombed

Three people were killed and more than 60 injured when a church service inaugurating a new Catholic Cathedral in Arusha, Tanzania was bombed on May 5.

The Vatican's ambassador to Tanzania, Archbishop Francisco Montecillo Padilla, and Josaphat Louis Lebulu, the Archbishop of Arusha, were in the church at the time of the attack but escaped unharmed. The cathedral, which is located in the Olasti district on the outskirts of Arusha, was filled with worshipers at the time of the attack, many of whom were outside the building when the bomb was thrown into the crowd from a motorcycle.

Nine people, including three nationals from the United Arab Emirates, one Saudi and five Tanzanians, have been arrested in connection with the bombing, which was described by President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete as "an act of terrorism." He said that Tanzania was "ready to deal with all criminals, including terrorists and their agents who are based in the country or externally."

The bombing is the latest in a series of attacks on Tanzania's Christian community that have occurred this year. In Zanzibar, the murder of a protestant pastor was followed by that of a Catholic priest. Following the murders, Church leaders began to receive threatening text messages from a group calling itself "Muslim Renewal", which claimed responsibility for the killings. The group claimed the killers were "trained in Somalia" and promised "disaster" during the Easter season. In March, a number of Christians were assaulted and a Pentecostal pastor was beheaded in Buseresere town in Geita Region by Muslims angered by the opening of a non-Muslim butchery. Also in March, an evangelist was attacked by unknown assailants in Mara Province.

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive at Christian Solidarity Worldwide, said, "We offer our heartfelt condolences to the families of the dead in this senseless attack. Signs of escalating attacks on Christians in Tanzania are deeply worrying. Although those arrested have yet to be charged, there is undoubtedly an international element to this attack, which if left unchecked, will severely

undermine the stability of the nation. CSW calls upon the Tanzanian authorities to take decisive action to tackle rising extremism and to ensure that justice is done, innocent civilians and worshippers are protected from violence, and an atmosphere of impunity is not allowed to take hold.”