



1.23.2012

NIGERIA Death toll rises in Kano State blasts, attacks foiled in Bauchi State

A series of bomb blasts rocked Bauchi and Kano states in northern Nigeria at the weekend, with the death toll in Kano estimated to be over 185 people.

Boko Haram has claimed responsibility for multiple bombings and a shooting spree targeting the immigration services, police headquarters and State Security Service (SSS) building in Kano, claiming at least 185 lives. The group promised to unleash multiple blasts there after one of their cells was uncovered in December 2011, stating at the time that they had left Kano untouched, but would take action if their people were not released. In an open letter to the people of Kano following the weekend's bombings, Boko Haram's spokesman Abul Qaqa said that only the intervention of un-named Muslim scholars was preventing the group from unleashing an "endless campaign of violence" on the state.

The Anglican Bishop of Kano spoke to Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) after identifying the corpse of a member of his congregation who had been missing since Friday: "The target was the government, but who is the government? It is the people."

Both Muslims and Christians were caught up in the bombings and subsequent shootings; however, there is unease in the Christian community that they may be directly targeted in future, as has occurred in the past when reprisals for events occurring abroad have been visited upon the local Christian community. As a result, many Christians from southern Nigeria are reported to be flocking to bus depots, either to return home or to flee to Abuja. Other Christians are also vowing to leave the city.

On Sunday 22 January in Bauchi Metropolis, Bauchi State, bombs were planted at the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) 2 in the Railway Area and Our Lady of St Lauretto Catholic Church, Fadama Mada, which sustained minor damage to their walls. There were no injuries or fatalities as the bombs exploded in the early hours of the morning.

On the same day in Tafawa Balewa Town, St Paul's Anglican Secondary School was partially destroyed by a bomb. An attempted attack on a police station was foiled and two of the would-be bombers were arrested and later confessed to the church attacks. There was also an attempted robbery of First Bank, and an attack on a hotel and military checkpoint in the Bununu District. The violence claimed the lives of two army officers, a deputy superintendent of police and eight civilians, including a child.

CSW's Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, "We express our deepest condolences to the families that lost loved ones in Kano and Bauchi during the weekend's violence. There is no conceivable justification for the mindless spree of brutality that has been unleashed in northern and central Nigeria, and has claimed the lives of so many innocent civilians, Muslim and Christian alike. It is vital that state and federal officials and security agents maintain a state of alertness and take all necessary measures to end Boko Haram's reign of terror, while ensuring that the rights of the innocent are protected."