

Blast Wreaks Bloodshed on Two Churches in Bauchi, Nigeria

A suicide bomber crashed the gate of a church compound in this northern Nigerian city on Sunday morning, killing himself and at least 10 others and leaving more than 30 injured, according to eyewitnesses and officials.

The Islamic extremist **Boko Haram** group was suspected of detonating the bomb at the gate of Living Faith church as members were leaving an early morning **worship** service; the explosion also brought down a wall of the adjacent Harvest Field church, an eyewitness told Compass.

“Security agents who were within the vicinity of the two churches tried to force the suicide bomber to stop at a security checkpoint, but the bomber crashed his car into the gates of one of the two churches, the Living Faith church, killing many people and injuring many others,” said Kyemme Nzarmo, a student at Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University in Bauchi.

Nzarmo told Compass he saw 12 corpses, other eyewitnesses reported 10 deaths, and at press time Bauchi State Police Commissioner Mohammed Ladan said eight church members and the bomber had been killed in the blast. A Nigerian Red Cross official told Compass it had brought at least 30 people to the Teaching Hospital of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University for treatment of wounds and burns.

The university student, who lives in the Yelwa Tudun area of Bauchi, said the injured have been taken to various hospitals in the city.

“There were human body parts and flesh all around as a result of the impact from the blast,” he said, adding that security personnel from the military have condoned off the area and

have been shooting to keep people away.

Police Commissioner Ladan said the bomber rammed through a checkpoint.

"We had mounted a road-block manned by our men, and they tried to prevent the bomber, but he refused to stop at the checking point and instead hit the security gate," Ladan said. "The bomb exploded and killed the people there."

Spokesmen for Boko Haram, which has carried out similar attacks in Nigeria, have been comparatively quiet since an April 26 bombing of an Abuja newspaper and have not taken responsibility for this explosion. With its Hausa-language name literally meaning "Forbidden Book" and translated as "Western education is forbidden," Boko Haram has targeted churches, state offices, law enforcement sites and some moderate mosques in its effort to destabilize the government and impose a strict version of shariah (Islamic law) on all of Nigeria.

The Islamic extremist sect has killed at least 530 people this year alone, according to the Associated Press.

Nigeria's population of more than 158.2 million is divided between Christians, who make up 51.3 percent of the population and live mainly in the south, and Muslims, who account for 45 percent and live mainly in the north. The percentages may be less, however, as those practicing indigenous religions may be as high as 10 percent of the total population, according to *Operation World*.