

Bombs in Nigerian Christian District Kill at Least 12

Police say 12 people are dead after multiple explosions on Monday night that rocked the Christian Sabon Gari area of Kano State in northern Nigeria, despite continuing government efforts to restore peace.

No group has claimed responsibility for Monday's blasts, but it is widely believed that the outlawed violent Islamic sect Boko Haram may be responsible for the attacks in which the official number of victims is being disputed by some residents.

There is no record of reprisal attacks. Security personnel have cordoned off the area.

The federal government has, however, given the Presidential Committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of Security Challenges in the North an additional two months to bring about peace in the northern parts of the country.

The chairman of the Committee and minister for Special Duties, Kabiru Tanimu Turaki, who announced the extension on Tuesday, lamented the Kano blast, noting it was sad some people who do not wish the country well are bent on prolonging the security crisis in the north.

Kano, the commercial nerve center of Northern Nigeria, has a predominantly Muslim population but the Sabon Gari area is populated mainly by Christians from southern parts of the country.

In March, Boko Haram claimed responsibility for suicide blasts at a bus park in the same district that killed at least 22 people.

The military Joint Task Force spokesperson, Capt. Ikedichi Iweha, confirmed the incident, and said preliminary investigations are underway.

Chief Michael Tobias Idika, president of Ohanaeze Ndigbo, a cultural group for southeast Nigerians living in Kano, issued a statement saying terrorists had attacked the Sabon Gari area at about 9:30 p.m., and had planted Improvised Explosive Devices that exploded almost simultaneously, affecting various houses.

“At 41 New Road, the Christ Salvation Pentecostal Church was also bombed at the peak of evening worship,” Idika’s statement read. In contrast to the police confirmation of 12 fatalities, “Ohanaeze’s account can confirm 39 deaths in New Road and six in Igbo/Enugu Road; and also unspecified numbers of people who got injured.”

The group called for better security in northern Nigeria.

The state governor, Rabi’u Musa Kwankwaso who visited the scene of the incident on Tuesday morning, condemned the multiple bomb blasts, describing them as devastating and an attack on the whole of Nigeria.

“This attack on Sabon Gari is an attack on Nigeria because Muslims and Christians are involved. Several people of different ethnic extraction have either lost their lives or are critically injured. Whoever did this thing targeted Nigeria,” Kwankwaso said.

The Muslim umbrella body in the north, Jama’atu Nasril Islam, on Monday raised an alarm of what it called a grand design to push the entire North, and by extension all of Nigeria, into deeper crisis.

In a statement signed by Secretary General Khalid Aliyu Abubakar, JNIGC wondered why the killing of innocent people has continued unabated, especially in the north:

“We strongly condemn the inhuman and ungodly act in its totality as it is reprehensible, and we equally call for calm and restraint. As it has always been our prayers, whatsoever is the intent/motive of the perpetrators of these contemptible acts, they will never succeed, insha’Allah [God-willing].”

The pan-northern socio-political organisation Arewa Consultative Forum also pleaded with those behind the attacks to disarm in the interest of the country.