

Car Bomb Attack on Christians Heightens Religions Tensions in Nigeria

A car bomb attack in a Christian enclave of Kano, the largest city in mainly-Muslim Northern Nigeria, has heightened religious and ethnic tensions throughout the country.

At least 25 people have been killed and at least 60 others injured, following the March 18 suicide bomb attack in a bus station in the Christian district of Sabon Gari. The bus station is primarily used by passengers heading for the mostly Christian South of the country. Five buses were destroyed, one reported to be full of people.

No group has yet claimed responsibility. The manner of attack is, however, similar to previous ones by the Islamist **Boko Haram** group. Its scale prompted Christian, Muslim and political leaders to urge the federal government to take urgent measures to avert a major crisis.

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and its main Muslim counterpart Jama'atu Nasril Islam, JNI (Society for the Victory of Islam) in separate reactions expressed deep concern. JNI's President, the Sultan of Sokoto is spiritual leader of Nigeria's 70 million Muslims and has huge power and influence.

The country's two religious leaders noted the Kano suicide attack was capable of threatening the unity of Nigeria, if such attacks continue.

Tuesday, March 19 was observed as a day of mourning, fasting and prayers for victims amidst reported fears of reprisal attacks on the Hausa Northern community who live in the south-east of the country.

CAN President Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor condemned “the barbaric and sustained bomb and gun attacks on innocent Nigerians” and called on the Federal government to support the Christian association’s call for the branding of Boko Haram as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation, or FTO.

“The Federal government should liaise with the international community and obtain their expertise in order to deal with the terror acts.

“The Federal government cannot continue to condemn these heinous acts of the enemies of unity and agents of death without prosecuting those already arrested. This does not add up in any way. The Federal government should do the right thing by prosecuting those already in its net with proven record of complicity.

“I plead with the government to fish out the sponsors of Jama’atul Ahlis Sunnah Lidda’awati Wal (commonly known as **Boko Haram**) and the Islamic group, Jama’atu Ansarul Muslimina fi Sudan better known as Ansaru, an al-Qaeda-aligned group and a splinter group whose specialty is the kidnapping and killing of Christian foreigners.