

Catholic Church Bombed in Kaduna City, Nigeria

A suicide bomber driving a Mercedes jeep forced his way into St Rita's Catholic Church, Anguwan Yero, in the Malali area of Kaduna City at approximately 8:35 a.m. on Oct. 28, detonating an explosion that killed at least four worshippers and left many more with severe injuries.

According to eyewitnesses, after being denied entrance to the church grounds at the gate, the bomber reversed his vehicle then rammed into the church's perimeter wall, destroying the area reserved for the church's choir. The resident priest Reverend Father Bonny, who is recovering in hospital, was initially reported to have been amongst the fatalities. The force of the explosion also caused severe structural damage to several nearby homes and buildings.

The attack comes two days after young people from across the religious divide organised a celebration of the Muslim holiday Eid el-Kabir, in the latest reconciliation organised by the Christian-Muslim Peace and Unity Initiative of Nigeria. During the gathering, which was attended by dignitaries from both religious communities and widely reported in the press, a ram was symbolically sacrificed as the youth called for an end to the practice whereby young men are used as foot soldiers by forces bent on fomenting religious violence.

"We are deeply saddened by this attack, which is capable of de-railing ongoing interfaith reconciliation initiatives that have been making slow but sure progress. Nevertheless, we must continue to seek and work for peace," says Yunusa Nmadu, CEO of CSW Nigeria.

"The aim of those behind this appalling violence is to turn the two religious communities irrevocably against each other,

thereby destroying the nation. However, we must not play into their hands but should instead join forces to flush them out of our communities and bring an end to every lingering source of tension, suspicion and violence.”

Andrew Johnston, advocacy director at CSW extended his heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims of this appalling attack: “The actions of a destructive minority must not be allowed to disrupt the peace building work that is taking place in Kaduna, and people of goodwill should continue to unite across the religious divide to ensure the return of lasting peace and security to the state.”