

ISIS Bomb Kills at Least 12 and Wounds 50 at Pentecostal Church in Democratic Republic of Congo

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At least 12 people were killed and 50 more wounded when a bomb exploded during a church service Sunday in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, an attack for which ISIS is claiming responsibility, the country's government and the UN have reported.

The DRC's Communications Ministry reported that the attack on the 8th Community of Pentecostal Church in Kasindi in North Kivu was "visibly perpetrated" by members of the rebel group Allied Democratic Forces, which has ties with ISIS. The DRC government "strongly condemns the bomb attack."

Through its propaganda arm Amaaq, ISIS took responsibility for the incident, saying ISIS fighters planted an improvised explosive device in the church.

The Associated Press reported that survivors and witnesses said the blast severed people's limbs from their bodies. Videos and photos seen by the AP showed dead bodies lying on the ground outside the church, including what appeared to be a dead child.

The AP reported that 25-year-old Masika Makasi was sitting under a tent outside the church when she heard a noise that "sounded like a tire going flat." Makasi's leg was injured in the attack and her sister-in-law, who was several feet away from her, "died instantly."

UN Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said in a statement Sunday that United Nations Mine Action Service is supporting the Congolese authorities in conducting the investigation into the bombing. Several waves of violence have plagued the DRC's North Kivu province for decades despite efforts from international peacekeepers to keep it at bay.

✖ "The Secretary General reiterates that the United Nations, through his Special Representative in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, will continue to support the Congolese government and people in their efforts to bring peace and stability in the east of the country," Dujarric said in a statement.

Trupti Agrawai, senior East Africa analyst for the Economist Intelligence Unit, a global media and information services company, told the AP that the attack on the church works into the narrative of the region's conflict taking a "religious turn."

"It is likely to deepen anti-Islam sentiment in the Christian majority country, particularly in the eastern province where Islamist rebels are most active," Agrawai said. {eo}

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