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NIGERIA Premature explosions destroy bomb-making factories in two states

On Monday two bomb making factories belonging to the Boko Haram Islamist militia were destroyed by explosions that killed or injured several bomb-makers in Kaduna State and Yobe State.

In the early afternoon of December 19, an improvised bomb detonated prematurely in a house in the Mando area of Kaduna metropolis, destroying seven surrounding houses and killing one of the bomb makers. Three other suspected bombers were seriously injured, and were apprehended by locals while attempting to flee the scene. Police found a weapons cache in the ruins of the house. On the same day, one suspected member of Boko Haram died in hospital from injuries sustained when a bomb he was constructing exploded at around midday in the Pompomari area of Damaturu in Yobe State. Two of his fellow bomb-makers are being pursued by Yobe State police, who also recovered various weapons and bomb-making materials from the scene.

The explosions follow two similar incidents in the Borno State capital earlier in December. On 13 December, four people were reported to have died when a bomb exploded in the London Ciki Ward of Maiduguri. At least one of them was a suspected Boko Haram member. Four days later, the premature explosion of an improvised device in the Bolori area claimed the lives of the three Boko Haram members who had been constructing it. The house they were in was allegedly discovered to be a major Boko Haram factory for the production of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), and AK-47 rifles, explosive substances, wires, wired clocks, remote controls and sensors were reportedly found at the scene.

In a comment on recent events, the Chief Executive Officer of CSW Nigeria, the Reverend Yunusa Nmadu, said, "The bomb blasts and subsequent discoveries of dangerous weapons especially in Kaduna reveal the extent to which our society have become increasingly insecure and prone to violence. We call on the federal and state government to conduct house to house searches that are sensitive enough to respect the rights of the innocent, but rigorous enough to uncover potential perpetrators of atrocities."

Last weekend, police in the Kano State capital apprehended 14 suspected members of Boko Haram after a fire fight in which three policemen and four members of the sect were killed. According to the Kano State police force, large amounts of ammunition were recovered from the homes of two of the Boko Haram suspects, including AK-47 rifles, pump-action shotguns, detonators, home-made bomb casings gunpowder and ammonium nitrate. Boko Haram has threatened massive retaliation.

On 16 December pamphlets appeared in Jos signed by an unidentified group threatened to bomb various locations in Plateau State on Christmas Day and Boxing Day, including churches and other civilian targets.

Andrew Johnston, Advocacy Director of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), said, "While it is a relief that four bomb-making facilities are now out of action, it remains vital that the security services and peace-loving citizens of Kaduna, Plateau, Yobe, Borno, and other vulnerable states remain vigilant regarding attempts to violently disrupt Christmas celebrations. Too many innocent people have already lost their lives as a result of bombings by Boko Haram, and for this reason CSW is urging prayers for the peace of northern and central Nigeria throughout this season and beyond."