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NIGERIA | Kaduna Easter bomb claims 39 lives

The death toll from a suicide bomb detonated on Easter Sunday, April 8, in Nigeria's Kaduna State has risen to 39 people, according to reports by AFP News Agency. While no group has claimed responsibility for the attack, in which an estimated 30 people were injured, it is widely believed to be the work of the Boko Haram Islamist group.

A suicide bomber detonated a car loaded with an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) at Sardauna Crescent, by Junction Road, after a security guard prevented him from entering the area surrounding 1st Evangelical Church All Winning (ECWA) on Gwari Road. An estimated 12 people were killed immediately, but the number of dead and injured continued to rise in the aftermath of the blast.

Mr Francis Markus, a security guard attached to 1st ECWA Church, told CSW-Nigeria (CSW-N) how he was able prevent the bomber from entering the area near the church with the help of church member.

"I insisted that he will not pass until the service is over, but he insisted that he must pass. We dragged this for some minutes. He entered the car and reversed and drove towards me. Yet I stood my ground and held the iron which we used for the road block. He hit the iron against me. Luckily enough, one of the church members came with his bike, parked and intervened. At this point we noticed that the man was having an army uniform on the back seat of his car, and an army cap by the rear wind screen. Then I told him that as an Army officer, for him to behave that way, he is a disgrace to the Army."

Ten minutes or so after the bomber drove away towards Junction Street, Mr Markus heard the explosion. An estimated 60 buildings within a 500 meters radius of the blast were severely damaged by the blast and may need to be rebuilt. Eight cars and several commercial motorcycles were either burnt or severely damaged. CSW-N estimated that property worth millions of Naira was destroyed in the blast.

The Reverend Yunusa Nmadu, CEO of CSW-N, said, "I condemn in the strongest terms this barbaric act of terrorism which, though aimed at the Church, has claimed the lives of innocent Christians and Muslims of all tribes. CSW calls on the International community, and particularly the US administration, to designate the deadly Islamist militia Boko Haram a terrorist group, because this is what it is in reality. We particularly urge the Nigerian government to ensure adequate protection for Christians and their properties, as they are the main targets and regular victims of the Boko Haram insurgency."

Andrew Johnston, Advocacy Director of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), said, "CSW send our heartfelt condolences to the families who have lost loved ones as a result of this appalling attack. While it is heartening to hear that the church was able to evade the bomber's attempt due to the quick-thinking of their security guard, it is deeply distressing that other innocent civilians of all tribes and creeds were not so fortunate. The burden for security cannot be shouldered by private citizens alone, and we urge the security services to step up their efforts to ensure that all citizens are protected. We also call on key members of the international community to assist the Government of Nigerian by sharing intelligence and providing counter-insurgency training for the army and police force as they confront an enemy that has adopted increasingly sophisticated tactics."