

## Systematic suicide bombings at Nigerian churches leave around 16 dead

Country/Region: Africa, Nigeria

Around 16 people were killed and scores wounded in systematic suicide bombings at three churches in a Northern Nigerian state.



Nigerian Christians are continuing to attend church despite the danger

The explosions in Kaduna state went off within the space of an hour on Sunday morning (17 June). The first two targets were in city of Zaria, the third in the capital Kaduna city.

ECWA Goodnews Church in Wusasa district, which is the site of the first church to be built in Northern Nigeria, was hit at 8.35am. This was followed ten minutes later by a blast at Christ the King Church in Sabon Gari district.

Then at 9.30am, carnage was unleashed at Shalom Church in Kaduna city where a worshipper said he saw the bomber drive a car loaded with explosives into the church building.

There are also unconfirmed reports of two further attacks at churches in Nassarawa and Barnawa, south of Kaduna city.

Police arrested one of the bombers who survived. A 24 hour curfew was imposed in Kaduna in a bid to restore order after riots broke out.

The incidents bore the hallmarks of Islamist militant group Boko Haram, which, after committing two attacks on churches last Sunday, declared Christians enemies and threatened further violence.

Kaduna state, which lies on the dividing line between Nigeria's largely Christian South and predominantly Muslim North, was hit hard in last year's post-election violence; over 650 people were killed as Islamists rampaged against the re-election of Christian President Goodluck Jonathan.

Targeted attacks on churches and Christians in Northern Nigeria and the Middle Belt have become a weekly occurrence as Boko Haram intensifies its bloody campaign to establish an Islamic state in the North.

Despite the danger, Christians are continuing to attend services. A pastor in Jos, Plateau state, Abraham Ekeneh, said after a church suicide bombing in the city last Sunday:

*I always sense the fear in the atmosphere during Sunday services, but we still don't relent. We cannot stop attending Sunday services because if we do, it means we have helped them to achieve their objective. I encourage all Christians to be security-conscious, but not to stop attending Sunday services.*

Churches have increased their security in an effort to protect worshippers. Pastor Ekeneh said:

*We now have a heavier gate to prevent any unauthorised vehicle from coming into the church premises. We also don't allow even our members to park their cars anywhere near the church. These are some of the measures we have taken, but God remains our protector.*