

Nigerian religious leaders condemn attacks on Muslim worshippers

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(RNS) Nigerian religious leaders united to condemn a coordinated terrorist attack on a mosque in the city of Kano that left more than 120 people dead.

Two suicide bombers blew themselves up during Friday prayers in the city's central mosque on November 28. Later gunmen opened fire at the fleeing worshippers, eyewitnesses told the media.

The Islamist militant group, Boko Haram has waged a campaign of terror in this part of the country since 2009. It had previously targeted churches. But the Sunni jihadist group views the country's traditional Islamic religious authorities with disdain, too.

Kano is Nigeria's second-largest city. It lies in the country's north and has a population of more than 2 million.

The latest attack came days after the emir of Kano, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, urged civilians to take up arms to defend themselves against the militants. Sanusi is the second-most powerful Muslim leader in Nigeria after the sultan of Sokoto and leads prayers in the central mosque. On the same day, a bomb attack was foiled in another mosque in Maiduguri in the country's northeast.

Sanusi, a fierce Boko Haram critic, said he is not intimidated by the attack and pushed for the scene of the explosion to be cleaned to allow worshippers to return.

Roman Catholic bishops condemned the attack as senseless and wicked.

In Maiduguri, John Bakeni, a Catholic priest, said he feared the attacks might escalate as Christmas approaches.

"We need the international community to act fast," he said. "We are perishing."