

Nigeria bomb attacks kill 44 at mosque, restaurant

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Abdussalam Mohammed of the National Emergency Management Agency said 67 other people were wounded in the Sunday attack and were being treated in hospitals.

Witnesses who requested anonymity for fear of reprisals said the explosion at the Yantaya mosque came as a leading cleric who preaches peaceful coexistence was addressing a crowd during the holy month of Ramadan.

Another bomb exploded at Shagalinku, a restaurant patronized by elite politicians.

Jos is located where Nigeria's majority Muslim north and mainly Christian south collide. The city has been targeted in the past by bomb blasts that have killed hundreds of people. Boko Haram Islamic extremists have claimed responsibility for the attacks.

The explosion at the Yantaya mosque came as leading cleric Sani Yahaya of the Jama'atu Izalatul Bidia organization, which preaches peaceful coexistence of all religions, was addressing a crowd during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, according to survivors who spoke on condition of anonymity.

They said they did not know how many worshippers were killed.

Sunday's attacks are the latest in a string blamed on Boko Haram that have killed more than 200 people over the past week in the group's northeastern stronghold.

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The extremists returned Sunday to northeastern villages attacked three days earlier, killing nine villagers and burning down 32 churches and about 300 homes, said Stephen Apagu, chairman of a vigilante self-defense group

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in Borno state's Askira-Uba local government area.

He said the vigilantes killed three militants.

Boko Haram took over a large swath of northeastern Nigeria last year and stepped up cross-border raids. A multinational army from Nigeria and its neighbors forced the militants out of towns, but bombings and village attacks increased in recent weeks, apparently in response to an Islamic State group order for more mayhem during Ramadan.

Boko Haram became the Islamic State group's West Africa franchise earlier this year.
