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Nigerian church condemns bombing that claimed at least 71 lives

by Peter Ajayi Dada by Catholic News Service

Lagos, Nigeria — The Catholic church in Nigeria condemned the morning rush-hour bombing of a bus station near the capital of Abuja that killed at least 71 people and injured dozens more Monday.

"The killing of innocent Nigerians once again makes us ask how many more innocent people must die before a solution is found to the brutality and insecurity of lives and property in our country," said Fr. Christian Anyanwu, national director of social communications for the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, the social development arm of the Nigerian bishops' conference.

"We commiserate with the families of those who have lost their lives. Indeed it is another sad day in our history as a nation," Anyanwu wrote in an email.

The priest's response Wednesday came as reports that Boko Haram insurgents had abducted 100 female students from the Government Girls Secondary School in the northeastern town of Chibok less than 24 hours after the bombing.

Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan accused Boko Haram for the bombing during a visit Monday.

Anyanwu said the perpetrators of the violence "want us to live in perpetual fear."

"But we cannot be deterred. We can never give up our faith in God and our belief in the unity of our country," he said.

Anyanwu suggested that Nigerian leaders must begin to address the challenges facing the country including growing insecurity.

"There is need to review the strategy of fighting insurgency which has not yielded much desired fruit. The gathering of intelligence and the courage to act with intelligent reports is important to win the war on terrorism," he said.

Elsewhere, Msgr. Gabriel Osu, director of social communications for the Lagos archdiocese, said the bombings and other violence would not deter Catholics from attending Holy Week liturgies and parish Easter celebrations.

Saying the Catholic church is saddened by the violence, Osu pledged that churches would remain open across the country, although he expected attendance at Easter triduum services would drop in Abuja and neighboring communities.

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He also urged insurgents to stop killing innocent people to achieve political goals.

Osu called upon Nigerian leaders to invest in the education of Nigeria's youth, especially those from the northeastern part of Nigeria where the insurgency is strongest.

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