

Hello, and welcome back to another edition of the program that helps you learn and improve your American English. I'm Jim Tedder in Washington. Today we hear about another terrorist attack in Nigeria. Officials fear Boko Haram rebels are getting stronger.

Then we will examine events that are taking place during the holiest week in the Christian calendar.

We are here to help you 7 days a week, on the Internet, on radio, and on television. And we talk about things that are important for all of us to understand. The show is called ...As It Is.

Nigeria experienced another deadly terror attack Monday. Police said a bombing killed at least 71 people at a bus station close to the capital, Abuja. Experts say the most recent attack appears to be a sign that the Islamist rebels of Boko Haram have expanded their operations in Nigeria.

Taxi driver Joseph Suleiman was driving into Abuja shortly before 7 o'clock in the morning, local time, when the bomb exploded.

“We were inside the car. We heard the bomb blast and my car was shaking. Everybody, we were totally confused.”

Abuja, Nigeria’s capital, has not had a bomb attack in two years. At that time, Boko Haram targeted a media group killing several people.

In 2011, more than 60 people were killed in Abuja in attacks that targeted the local United Nations headquarters and a Christian church.

Mr. Sulieman says he saw many badly injured people as he passed a bus station. He said people in the area told him that Boko Haram had exploded a car bomb.

Some officials say the Boko Haram rebellion is growing. The group is mainly active in three northeastern Nigerian states. The area is under emergency rule.

Member of Parliament Herman Hembe says the government has been spending huge amounts of money on security. But he does not think things are getting better.

“I don’t see any improvement. It’s just been getting worse.”

Boko Haram has been blamed for thousands of deaths since the rebellion began in 2009. Amnesty International says 1,500 people have been killed in attacks this year. The group says about 500,000 have fled their homes.

Boko Haram says it wants to destroy the government. The group also wants to enforce its version of Islamic law.

Many observers partly blame the rebellion on extreme poverty. They say unemployment drives young men to fight for Boko Haram for small amounts of money.

Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor is president of the Christian Association of Nigeria. He says the rebellion is the result of religious extremism although poverty does drive some to join the group.

“It’s about ideology. It’s not poverty. It’s not about marginalization. Yes it is true that when you deal with poverty, you may reduce the number of recruits – people that they can recruit.”

The only way to end the rebellion, says the pastor, is to fight the extremism through education and the religious leadership in mostly-Muslim northern states.

The Nigerian military says it has forced back Boko Haram fighters and re-claimed many areas once held by the rebels. The military also says Boko Haram attempted to gain new members by leading a huge prisoner escape last month. Security forces killed hundreds of detainees fleeing the prison.

Boko Haram claimed responsibility for the prisoner escape. It also has threatened more violence. The group has not claimed responsibility for the latest bomb attack however. Boko Haram often communicates with the public through video messages, which can take days or weeks to be released.

## **It Is Holy Week for Christians**

Christians around the world are observing Holy Week. It is the most important and serious holiday time in the Christian religion. It begins with what many Christians call Palm Sunday. Palm Sunday observes the day Christians believe Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem 2000 years ago. The following Sunday is Easter, the day Christians believe Christ came back to life after execution on the cross. Caty Weaver tells us more.

Those are the bells of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. It stands in the place where Christians say Jesus died on the cross and was buried.

On Sunday, the church was crowded with worshippers waving palm leaves. They represent the palm leaves that the crowd spread in front of Jesus as he rode on a donkey into Jerusalem. At the time, that was a traditional way to welcome and honor an important person.

The worshippers Sunday also called out “Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” Christians believe the people of ancient Jerusalem also did this as Christ arrived in the city. Visitors came from around the world this year, as in years past. Miriam Akin travelled from Nigeria.

“Oh, I feel great, I feel awesome, I feel elated. And I give all the glory to God for bringing us to this awesome place.”

Another worshipper, Jane Reynolds, came from the southern U.S. state of Georgia. She said the experience brings the Christian holy book, the Bible, to life.

“This is where Jesus actually went down that hill into the city. It just is amazing to me to think I am in the same spot, and to think that it really happened, and that it is not just black and white on the pages.”

In Vatican City in Palm Sunday Pope Francis gave a service for thousands of people gathered in St. Peter’s Square. The Roman Catholic Church leader decided against using the homily, or speech, he had prepared for the service. In his talk, he discussed the people around Jesus in the days before his execution and return. The Pope asked “Where is my heart, and which of these persons am I most like?”

After the service, Pope Francis went into the crowd. He joined some of those gathered to have his photograph taken.

Later this week, Christians will observe Good Friday, the day Jesus was believed to have been died on the cross. Holy Week ends on Saturday. That is the day Christians believe Jesus’ body lay in its burial place.

Sunday begins Easter week in the Christian religious tradition. Easter is the day Christians believe Jesus woke from death and left his burial tomb. I'm Caty Weaver.

And I'm Jim Tedder in Washington. This is VOA.





