

Bishops condemn bomb blast in Manila, say it could be part of plot

MANILA, Philippines – Catholic bishops have condemned a deadly bomb attack on a bus in Manila's business district, warning it could have been an attempt to destabilize the government.

The Jan. 25 blast killed five people and wounded 12 others, reported the Asian church news agency UCA News. Police said an 81 mm mortar shell with a cell phone as a triggering device was used.

"We should be vigilant. There could be people out to destabilize the present government," said Bishop Honesto Ongtioco of Cubao.

"We should also pray for those who commit evil so that they may realize its consequences," he added.

Retired Bishop Teodoro Bacani of Novaliches also said the attack might be part of a plot to destabilize the government. He called on President Benigno Aquino III to prove he can run the country and implement its laws.

"The people need to believe in you now," Bishop Bacani said.

Bishop Juan de Dios Pueblos of Butuan said the bus bombing might be a "political message" for Aquino to address poverty, corruption and killings that are plaguing the country.

Meanwhile, Bishop Dinualdo Gutierrez of Marbel called for swift action against those responsible for the blast and challenged the Philippine National Police to improve its intelligence-gathering capability to prevent further attacks. The bishop also called for "communal action" to maintain peace and order in the country.

"Communal action is the responsibility of everybody," he added.

Bishop Deogracias Iniguez of Kalookan, chairman of the Philippine bishops' public affairs committee, agreed.

“The government should act on this quickly. Let us all do what we can as soon as possible to investigate the root of this,” he said.

“Let the enforcers of law and order wake up. We cannot just ignore this incident,” he added.