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Eight kidnappers arrested as Oyo pupils, teachers regain freedom



- ***Presidency: Some bandits neutralised; no ransom or prisoner swap***
- ***Tinubu commends operatives; directs emergency support for victims, vows justice for slain vice principal***
- ***We're grateful to President, security agents, says freed Principal in new video***

Fifty-Six days of anxiety and emotional anguish nationwide ended with widespread jubilation yesterday as security agents rescued all the pupils, students and teachers abducted by bandits from three schools in **Oriire Local Government Area** of Oyo State.

The rescue operation saw eight suspected kidnappers arrested while several others were neutralised.

The Presidency announced the breakthrough yesterday, describing it as the outcome of sustained security operations that also foiled the abductors' attempt to secure the release of one of their detained leaders.

Special Adviser to the President on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, disclosed the development in a series of posts on his verified X handle.

"Finally, all the kidnapped pupils and teachers in Oriire, Oyo have been rescued by our security agencies," Onanuga wrote.

Eighteen nursery and primary school pupils, seven secondary school students and seven teachers were marched into the vast forest reserve.

Onanuga later provided additional details, saying: "In the course of the rescue operation, eight of the kidnappers were arrested and are now in DSS custody, while some of them were neutralised."

He denied reports suggesting that the victims regained their freedom through negotiations or in exchange for a prisoner.

"There was no quid pro quo in the rescue as one of the terrorists, a kingpin that the kidnappers demanded his release, is being prosecuted for his atrocities," he said, adding that "the security agencies will give full account soon."

The victims were abducted on May 15 when heavily armed bandits attacked Community Grammar School, Baptist Nursery and Primary School, and L.A. Primary School in the Esiele and Yawota communities of Oriire Local Government Area, seizing dozens of pupils, students and teachers.

The abduction sparked nationwide outrage, with parents, labour unions, traditional rulers and civil society groups mounting sustained pressure on the authorities to secure the victims' release.

The incident also triggered an indefinite strike by the Nigeria Union of Teachers in Oyo State over growing insecurity in schools.

President Bola Tinubu had condemned the attack and ordered security agencies to intensify intelligence-led operations to rescue the captives and bring the perpetrators to justice.

The President subsequently dispatched a high-powered Federal Government delegation to the affected communities, approved the deployment of specialised rescue assets and authorised the recruitment of 1,000 forest guards to strengthen security across Oyo State.

Yesterday's operation marks the end of one of the country's most closely watched school kidnapping cases in recent months.

Makinde applauds President, security agents, media

Oyo State Governor Seyi Makinde yesterday expressed overwhelming joy over the successful rescue of the schoolchildren and teachers. Visibly moved, he said his emotions had overcome his capacity to give a formal speech.

Speaking on the phone from the Government House, the governor said: "I think I am just right now overjoyed and I can hardly say much. I will talk much later when I can put my thoughts together."

He explicitly lauded the resilience and coordination of the security forces who broke the back of the criminal cartel without casualties among the children.

"We use the opportunity to say thank you to our service commanders, the Nigerian Police, the DSS, the military and the high command, and of course, the President, for pushing really hard to have this done," Makinde stated.

Beyond the immediate euphoria of the children's safe return, the governor recognised the immense role played by the media in keeping the government and security forces on their toes during the grueling 56-day ordeal.

Read Also: [NSCIA hails Tinubu, security operatives for rescue of Oyo schoolchildren](https://thenationonline.ng/eight-kidnappers-arrested-as-oyo-pupils-teachers-regain-freedom/)

He explicitly commended journalists for sustaining public interest, which kept the federal security apparatus focused on Oyo State.

Makinde acknowledged the relentless coverage, saying: "We are also grateful to the press for sustaining the pressure on everybody until we got to this point.

"The media's constant reporting had amplified the calls of protesting parents and civil groups, ensuring that the rescue did not lose momentum."

In a statement yesterday, Oyo State Commissioner for Information, Prince Dotun Oyelade, said the government was grateful that the victims had regained their freedom after weeks in captivity.

"We are happy to report to our people in Oyo State that our children and teachers at Oriire have been released from captivity," the statement reads in part.

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Oyelade said the successful release of the captives marked a significant test of the state's resolve against criminal elements, stressing that it remained committed to resisting the payment of ransom despite pressure to adopt what it described as a "quick-fix" approach.

Prince Oyelade stated that by refusing to throw money at bandits to secure a temporary solution, Governor Seyi Makinde's administration had demonstrated courage and a long-term commitment to tackling kidnapping and banditry.

He noted that yielding to ransom demands would only encourage criminals and strengthen their operations.

The commissioner added that the administration's approach reflected its determination to confront insecurity through pragmatic and sustainable measures rather than actions that could embolden criminal gangs seeking to destabilise the country.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to protecting the lives and property of residents while continuing to work with security agencies to rid Oyo State of kidnapping and other criminal activities.

We're grateful to our father Mr President, says released principal

The abducted Principal of Community High School, Ahoro-Esinele in the Oriire Local Government Area of Oyo State, Mrs. Rachael Alamu, yesterday expressed appreciation and thanks to President Bola Tinubu for the safe rescue of the other teachers and students.

She was spotted in a viral 38 seconds video where she also acknowledged the efforts of the security operatives whom she said played significant roles in the bid to secure their release.

She said: "Our father, we are grateful. The President sir, we are grateful. We understand your commitment to our safety and we appreciate all you did for us.

“We could see your hand. Thank you very much.

“And every security operative, they tried so much and that is why we are still alive now.

“We are very grateful to you. May God continue to bless you. Thank you sir.”

The 38-second video, apparently taken in a bushy background, saw the principal, students and teachers apparently in jubilant mood, all echoing the “thank you, we are grateful” message to the President and the operatives.

In the video, the rescued children were seen sharing biscuits and looking active and excited.

Jubilation in Ogbomoso as abducted students, learners regain freedom

A great sense of relief and cautious optimism enveloped Ogbomoso and its surrounding communities yesterday, following the successful rescue of 46 pupils and teachers abducted from schools in Oriire Local Government Area.

The victims, who spent 56 days in captivity after being violently seized from three local schools on May 15, regained their freedom yesterday.

The news of their release has triggered spontaneous celebrations across the region, effectively breaking the atmosphere of anxiety and dread that had gripped the community for nearly two months.

In Ogbomoso town, residents, traders, and commercial motorcyclists flooded the streets to celebrate the safe return of the schoolchildren and their educators.

Major markets and transport hubs, which had previously been disrupted by series of protests and strike actions ordered by the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT), witnessed a sudden surge in activities.

“We have not slept with our two eyes closed since May, but today, God has wiped away our tears and given us reasons to dance again,” shouted Samuel Adebayo, a prominent trader at the popular Akunko Market as he waved a white handkerchief to passing crowds.

In a viral video, the residents were upbeat and full of joy as military vehicles and patrol vans conveying the freed abductees passed through Tarki, Ogbomoso late Friday night.

Official statements from the Presidency confirmed that the successful rescue was the outcome of a coordinated, intelligence-driven operation involving the military, the police, and the Department of State Services (DSS).

Despite the widespread euphoria, a palpable layer of apprehension remains within the rural settlements of the Oriire Local Government Area, as residents call for sustained security measures.

Commenting on the long-term implications of the incident, a community leader in Ogbomoso, Chief Amos Olayanju, noted that while the return of the victims is a major victory, the government must ensure this never happens again.

“Our hearts are full of joy today. But we must be realistic: the government needs to station permanent security personnel around our rural schools so our children can learn without looking over their shoulders,” Olayanju stated.