

17-year-old boy, 13 others released after payment of N60m ransom to bandits in Kogi

Bandits shoot two due to fatigue during long trek in the forest

A 17-year-old boy, Emmanuel Okonkwo, who was kidnapped by bandits in Kogi State with 14 others, has regained his freedom.

Okonkwo was among the 15 passengers who were kidnapped in Kabba axis of Kogi State on November 9, while traveling from Lagos to Abuja.

The vehicle belonging to Andylyz Transport Company, in which Okonkwo was traveling, was attacked by the bandits, who took all the passengers into the bush.

The bandits placed individual ransoms on them.

While in the bush, two of the passengers became too weak to embark on the long trek into the forest and got killed by the bandits.

The source said that it is the operational rule of the bandits not to hold captives for more than seven days, as

they often carry out immediate execution after a week.

The 17-year-old boy, while narrating his ordeal to family members, said kidnappers fed their victims with rice and beans cooked without salt and indeed, anything.

"The victims are fed once in a day and they drink from the dirty water in the forest where they were held for days," he said.

It was gathered that security formations in Kogi advised family members of the victims to immediately raise the ransom, dismissing the possibility of security operations to set them free.

After days of pleading and a grueling process of negotiation, the bandits agreed to place a ransom of N80 million on the abducted passengers which was negotiated down to N60 million.

They gave an ultimatum of seven days to the worried family members to raise the money in months or risk losing them.

The terrorists were said to have given the condition that the ransom should be delivered to them with the same company bus that was attacked.

They also insisted that the money be delivered in six packs of N1000 notes.

"In fact, what we were told is that when they kidnap anybody in that Kogi axis, the issue of rescue is completely ruled out. Even, the security people will tell you that you have to raise the ransom to get your person out.

"The kidnappers asked us to bring six bags and put the money, N10 million, in each bag in N1,000 denomination only.

"They were very mean. On three occasions, they cocked gun to shoot Emmanuel Okonkwo, but later dropped the gun. One of them chased him around with a knife to stab him on several occasions in the bush that the knife nearly cut off his hand.

"And they demanded that the ransom be delivered using the same company bus. One of their drivers did the delivery as they called that they wanted only one person to come."

It was gathered that while the negotiations were ongoing, the kidnappers kept moving the victims around Obeiba Ihima, Kogi; along Ikowa Road, Near Transformer, Kabba, around Okebuku-Bunu area and a Piece of land, behind NTA Tower, Kabba-Ayetoro Road, Okegbo, Kogi State.

1

5