

THE Saturday Issue



Finally, Oyo pupils, teachers rescued

- Nine terrorists killed, eight arrested
- Tinubu celebrates, Makinde expresses big relief
- Freed schoolchildren, teachers express joy
- How military weakened the terrorists

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After enduring 56 days of starvation and emotional trauma in terrorists' den, 39 schoolchildren from three schools in Oriire Local Government Area of Oyo state and seven of their teachers yesterday regained freedom after they were rescued during a joint operation involving personnel of the Nigerian Army and the police, backed by intelligence from the DSS.

Nine of the terrorists were killed during the rescue operation while eight others were arrested and are in DSS custody.

Freed schoolchildren, teachers express joy

Following their release, the rescued pupils and teachers looked emaciated and weak but were evidently joyful in a video posted by the presidential spokesman, Mr Bayo Onanuga. The manner they hungrily attacked the snacks provided for them showed that they had been starved in the custody of their abductors. They nonetheless, noisily chorused their appreciation to President Bola Tinubu and the nation's security agencies for their efforts in securing their freedom. In the video, the vice principal of Community Grammar School, Mrs Alamu Folawe, who was surrounded by other freed captives said, "We are grateful, Mr President, sir. We understand your commitment to our safety, and we appreciate all you did for us. Every security operative tried so much and that is why we are still alive now. We are very grateful to you. Thank you very much," she added. Ms Folawe had been filmed in previous propaganda footage released by terrorists where she was seen pleading with the government to give their abductors whatever they wanted.

Rescue operation

One source with direct knowledge of the matter told an online newspaper, PREMIUM TIMES that military personnel sabotaged food supply to the forest reserve where the terrorists were camping. This, the source said, made the group run out of supplies.

He added that some associates of the abductors who live outside their camps

were also picked up by security forces. According to him, this weakened the negotiating strength of the terrorists.

Tinubu celebrates, commends security agencies

In his reaction, President Bola Tinubu expressed profound joy at the successful rescue of the children and their teachers. He praised the heroic efforts of the security agencies, especially the military, the DSS and the police, for working round the clock in the last 56 days to secure the release of the abducted children and their teachers without any collateral damage and for arresting eight of the abductors and neutralising others.

The President regretted the anguish that the children and their teachers, as well as members of their families and the entire nation, have experienced since the sad occurrence. For cooperating with the Federal Government in all rescue efforts, Tinubu commended the Oyo State Government and charged it to ensure adequate security around schools across the state.

A statement by the presidential spokesman, Bayo Onanuga, quoted the president as saying: "I am profoundly happy that our security forces successfully rescued the abducted pupils and teachers from Oriire, Ogbomoso in Oyo State today after a military, police and intelligence-driven operation that neutralised some of the terrorists that perpetrated the evil act and the arrest of eight of them."

"This successful military operation has ended the siege and standoff of over 50 days and has brought relief to the entire nation and the affected families in particular. On behalf of the country, I express my gratitude to the officers and men of our armed forces, the intelligence agencies and the police for the safe rescue of the children and their teachers."

"My government will get justice for these children and their teachers and for the family of Mr Oyedokun, who the terrorists gruesomely murdered. I must commend the government of Oyo State for working cooperatively with us in bringing this unfortunate incident to a successful end," the President said. He then directed that the emergency agencies work with the Oyo State Government to provide all necessary medical and relief support to the children and the teachers.

A big relief for all of us

—Gov Makinde

Governor Seyi Makinde, who said he was

overjoyed over the rescue thanked the Service commanders, the DSS, military and President Bola Tinubu saying it was "a big relief for all of us". He also expressed gratitude to the press "for mounting pressure on everybody".

In a statement issued later by the Commissioner for Information, Prince Dotun Oyelade, the state government described the rescue as a significant victory in the fight against kidnapping and a vindication of its refusal to pay ransom to criminals.

It expressed gratitude over the safe return of the victims after weeks in captivity, saying their release underscored the state's commitment to tackling insecurity through principled and sustainable measures rather than financing criminal networks.

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

Prince Oyelade described the successful release as a major test of the administration's resolve against criminal elements, stressing that the government resisted intense pressure to embrace what it described as a "quick-fix" solution by paying ransom to the kidnappers.

According to him, Governor Seyi Makinde's administration demonstrated courage and strategic leadership by refusing to throw money at bandits in exchange for the victims' freedom, maintaining that such payments would only encourage criminality, strengthen kidnapping syndicates and fuel further attacks.

He said the government's approach reflected its determination to confront insecurity through pragmatic and sustainable measures rather than actions capable of emboldening criminal gangs seeking to destabilise the country.

The commissioner reaffirmed the administration's commitment to protecting the lives and property of residents while continuing to work closely with security agencies to rid Oyo State of kidnapping and other violent crimes.

Eight weeks of agony has ended — Husband of freed Oyo principal, Prof Alamu

Professor Wale Alamu, husband of Mrs Rachael Alamu, the principal who was among the pupils and teachers abducted in Oriire Local Government Area of Oyo State, described the victims' release as the end of eight weeks of anguish, while calling on the government to draw lessons from the incident to prevent a recurrence.

Speaking with Saturday Vanguard after news of the announcement of the victims' release, Professor Alamu said the family had endured weeks of emotional trauma before receiving the welcome development.

"For the past eight weeks, I have been living through immense pain. Today, God has taken that pain away," he said.

The academic expressed appreciation to all those who played roles in securing the victims' freedom, saying the successful rescue reflected the collective efforts of government and Nigerians across religious and social divides.

"I want to thank everyone who contributed to bringing an end to my suffering. I am grateful to the Presidency, the State Governor, the State Executive Council, Nigerians as a whole, Muslims, Christians and even traditional worshippers."

"Everyone played a part, and I sincerely appreciate every contribution, no matter how small, towards securing the release of our people," he said.

While expressing relief over the development, Professor Alamu urged the authorities to undertake a comprehensive review of the circumstances surrounding the abduction, stressing that the incident should serve as a lesson for strengthening security around schools and vulnerable communities.

"I believe everyone has learnt one lesson or another from this incident. Once a thorough review has been carried out, the government will identify the areas that need attention and take the necessary steps to ensure that such an unfortunate incident does not happen again," he added.

Happy moment for parents — NAPTAN

Also reacting, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Parent Teacher Association of Nigeria, NAPTAN, Chief Deolu Ogunbanjo, described the release of the abducted teachers and students as a happy moment for parents.

Speaking in an interview with Saturday Vanguard, he commended President Bola Tinubu and the military for the feat. "It is definitely a happy moment for us as parents. We thank God for the release of the abductees. It shows that our military can also be trusted and they can rise up to the occasion. However, we want the government to keep equipping and motivating our military and also not to relent."

"We still have those abducted in Borno and Kogi states among others still in captivity. We want the government to do everything possible to also secure their release. We cannot leave those ones and others in captivity. All our children and teachers still being held in captivity must be released," he stated.

Recall that after spending 63 days in captivity, pupils, students and teachers abducted in some schools in Oriire Local Government Area of Oyo State were on Friday released by their abductors.

Senator representing Borno South Senatorial District, Mohammed Ali Ndume, in his reaction while speaking on Channels Television programme, Politics Today, commended the security agencies for "taking the fight to the terrorists" saying "this is the first time that real rescue is being done".

Recall that the victims were abducted on May 15, 2026 when heavily armed terrorists attacked three schools in the Esirole and Yawota communities of Oriire Local Government Area. The affected schools were Community Grammar School, Baptist Nursery and Primary School, and L.A. Primary School, where the attackers kidnapped 39 pupils and seven teachers, including a principal.

The attack claimed the life of a teacher, Joel Adesiyun, who was reportedly killed while attempting to escape. Another teacher, Michael Oyedokun, was also killed by the terrorists while in captivity.

The abduction sparked widespread concern across Oyo State and beyond, prompting intensified interventions by security agencies. It also led the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) in the state to embark on a month-long strike to press for urgent action to secure the release of the victims.

Throughout the ordeal, the Oyo State Government consistently maintained that it would not pay ransom to kidnappers, insisting that yielding to such demands would only embolden criminal groups and undermine efforts to combat organised crime across the country.

Intrigues over the rescue

Meanwhile, intrigues are already playing out over the circumstances surrounding the rescue of the Oyo schoolchildren and their teachers. Governor Seyi Makinde had planned to receive the rescued pupils and their teachers yesterday evening and called a press briefing. But the press briefing was suddenly postponed till today on the excuse that the government officials would first hold discussions with the abductees before briefing the press or allowing any of them to grant interviews.

It was gathered that attempts were being made to first debrief the abductees in order to avoid contradictions regarding the alleged payment of ransom for their release which the state government has denied.

The Federal Government is also reportedly keen to ensure that the Oyo State Government does not take sole credit for the release of the abductees. Given the current circumstances, there was a possibility that the abductees were to be moved directly to Abuja, following a directive from the Inspector-General of Police (IGP).

It was gathered that Governor Makinde was not aware that the abductees would be released yesterday. It was only after he received the news that he had to rush back to Ibadan. Upon his arrival, a directive came from the Presidency that the abductees should be taken immediately to the military hospital in Oyo State for proper medical assessment and medical attention.