

Friday, Jul 16th | Last update 11:00:00 PM GMT | Headlines: PDP sets eyes on Lagos, Edo

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Kidnapping: Two police informants killed

Friday, 16 July 2010 06:00 Misbahu Bashir (Abuja) & Beatrice Onuchukwu (Akwa)



Inspector General of Police Ogbonna Onovo

Two persons who were passing information to the police in the efforts to track kidnapers of four journalists in Abia State were found dead, suspected to be killed by accomplices of the abductors.

A source involved in the operation to rescue the journalists told Daily Trust yesterday that the first person was killed on Wednesday while body of the second was found yesterday. The source did not give the gender of the killed informants and did not give further details.

Sources said people in the area were now reluctant to volunteer information to security agencies for fear for their safety.

But a senior official involved in the effort to free the journalists told our reporter that the security agencies were trying to convince people that measures had been taken to guarantee the safety of informants.

The abducted journalists are Wahab Oba, Sylvester Okereke, Adolphus Okonkwo and Shola Oyeyepo. They were taken along with their driver Yekini Aziz at Umuafor Ukwu, Obingwa Local Government Area of Abia State, on Sunday on their way back to Lagos after an NUJ national executive council meeting in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

The kidnapers yesterday reduced their ransom demand from N250 million to N30 million, president of the Nigerian Union of Journalists Mohammed Garba told Daily Trust by telephone last night. They earlier on Tuesday brought the ransom down to N150 million, then to N100 million and by Wednesday to N50 million.

Garba said yesterday, they pegged the ransom at N30 million and threatened that failure to pay up would endanger the lives of the journalists.

He said the police and other security agencies were doing their best to get the journalists freed, and assured Nigerian journalists that there was hope their colleagues would regain freedom "soon".

Garba yesterday spoke to two of the abducted journalists by telephone and assured them that efforts were on to get them released.

NUJ national secretary Shua'ibu Leman told Daily Trust that the union could not afford the N30 million being demanded by the kidnapers. "The union cannot pay that money. It's too much, we shall keep negotiating," he said.

Police Force Public Relations Officer Emmanuel Ojukwu said Inspector General of Police Ogbonna Onovo had requested families and friends of kidnapped people not to pay ransom as "such payment encourages others to get into the crime."

In Akwa, Anambra State, the Inspector-General of Police yesterday at an interactive session with traditional rulers, community leaders and leaders of vigilante groups warned that the incessant kidnapping in the Southeast could compel the Federal Government to declare a state of emergency in the region.

He said the zone would be heading for self-destruction with the continued violent crimes in the region, especially kidnapping for ransom.

Onovo said in Anambra State alone, about 400 kidnapers were in cells awaiting trial, and expressed hope that the establishment of special courts, now being proposed, to try suspected kidnapers would accelerate their trial.

He pledged automatic promotion to the next rank for any policeman who arrests kidnapers, and threatened to sack any DPO from whose area of operation kidnapping occurs.

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