

B/Haram 'relocates captives from Sambisa to Gwoza'



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Hundreds of women, girls and children who were held hostage by the Boko Haram insurgents at the Sambisa Forest for months have been relocated to Gwoza town in Borno State, an escapee said in Maiduguri yesterday.

A 38 year old woman (names withheld) who escaped from Gwoza at the weekend and arrived Maiduguri through Adamawa State on Monday also told journalists that Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau currently lives in Gwoza where he presides over the affairs of his people.

The woman said she and lots of her contemporaries were trapped in Gwoza after a major offensive by the Boko Haram in July and they became "war hostages" after Shekau declared the town as headquarters of his "Islamic Caliphate" in August.

"I am from Gwoza and many women, including children who were also from Gwoza all stayed under the Boko Haram for some months before over 300 women most of whom are between the ages of 16 and 22 were relocated from Sambisa Forest and other locations.

"The insurgents joined us with the girls and we were kept in various houses of famous people in Gwoza...I lived with some of them (girls) in one of the houses," the woman, a mother of five, said.

"We were kept under strict law as dictated by Shekau who moves from house to house, preaching. He says glad tidings await those that believe in Allah and observe the teachings of Islam," the woman, who spoke in Hausa, said.

The woman, who now lives at an IDPs camp in Maiduguri, was silent on the real identity of the girls, some of whom were suspected to be the Chibok girls.

On how she escaped from Gwoza, the woman said, "There was heavy blast near the house we were kept and the sound rattled everybody...I think it is a grenade of the insurgents; many people, including some of us scampered for safety .

"Two of the girls that were among those brought from Sambisa died from the blast and two others sustained injuries. Some of us that escaped trekked several kilometers through the bushes and later found ourselves in Madagali.

"The former governor of Adamawa state, Mr. Boni Haruna personally assisted me by calling my brother in Yola who went and picked me and thereafter brought me to Maiduguri," she said.

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