

# 6 Of 137 Rescued Kaduna Students Hospitalised, Teacher Dies

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The military yesterday said six out of the 137 Kuriga students rescued from kidnappers are receiving treatment in the hospital.

The General Officer, 1 Division of the Nigerian Army, Major General Mayirenso Saraso, said the hospitalised students would be handed over to the state government when doctors certify them fit.

Saraso disclosed this after handing over 131 Kuriga children to the Kaduna State governor, Uba Sani at the Government House.

Bandits invaded the LEA Primary School and Government Secondary School, Kuriga, Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna on March 7, 2024 and abducted the students.

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The students, comprising 76 females and 61 males, were rescued in Zamfara State on Sunday morning, according to the military.

The bandits had requested a ransom of N1 billion for their release and set a deadline of March 27. However, the federal government said no ransom was paid to secure the release of the students.

Speaking at the Kaduna Government House, General Saraso said both kinetic and non-kinetic approaches were adopted to rescue the students, who spent 16 days in captivity.

He also said one teacher, Mr Abubakar, who was also abducted, died in captivity.

The general explained that 131 students were physically brought to the Government House on Monday because six were hospitalised at a military facility in the state.

“In all, there were 137 children and one staff member making 138 persons altogether that were abducted from the co-located schools on the ill-fated day. But unfortunately, the staff member, Mr Abubakar, is not here with us today because he died while in captivity,” he said.

The rescued students were brought in six coaster buses belonging to the 1 Division Nigerian Army to the Sir Kashim Ibrahim House in Kaduna around 2 pm Monday.

They were received by top government officials led by Sani Kila, the Chief of Staff to the governor.

Governor Uba Sani commended President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu and all the serving security chiefs for their roles in rescuing the children.

The governor also said while some people seemed more concerned about how the children were rescued, the state was more concerned about the safety of the children.

He cautioned conflict merchants against politicising security issues in the state and country in general.

“When this incident happened, most went to the media and speculated that 287 children were abducted. For me, this is senseless and irresponsible. Today, all the children abducted are here with us in our presence,” he said.

He said they will soon be handed over to their parents, saying the most important responsibility of the government is the protection of lives and property of its citizens.

But the Foundation for Investigative Journalism (FIJ) said it was at Kuriga yesterday where parents and some security operatives insisted that 287 students were abducted.

“We have the full list. There were 287 abductees, including pupils, students and teachers,” a security officer told FIJ.

“This list was compiled by parents and teachers and given to the vice principal because even the principal of the junior secondary school was kidnapped,” FIJ was told.

Daily Trust reports that most parents were anxiously waiting to be reunited with their children.

“It is only when the children are united with their parents that the true picture of what is happening will come to the fore,” a source said.

“Parents whose children are still missing will definitely voice out when those rescued finally get back home. For now, everyone is waiting,” another source said.

### **No food for us in the bush – Students**

One of the rescued students, who simply identified herself as Aisha, said they were not well-fed while in captivity by their abductors.

“We were not well-fed while in the forest because there was not enough food. They only gave the little they had,” she said.

On whether they were beaten by their abductors, she said, “The girls were not beaten; only a few of the boys and our late teacher were beaten.”

Another rescued student sitting close to Aisha, who didn’t mention her name, also said, “Babu abinci a daji” (No cooked food in the forest), she simply said.

She didn’t give details of the type of food they were given because security agents interfered as our reporter was talking to the students.

### **No ransom paid – FG**

Meanwhile, the Minister of Education, Prof Tahir Mamman, said no ransom was paid to secure the release of the Kuriga students.

The minister disclosed this on Monday while delivering a speech at a two-day capacity-building workshop for the ministry’s officials.

Prof Mamman said the ministry was planning to gather data on all schools in Nigeria irrespective of their location.

“We need to know every single student and teacher in every school in Nigeria because data has eluded us for too long,” he said.

Prof Mamman said the school data would help them to advise the state governments to do the right thing.

The minister also decried the learning crisis in the country, saying a report submitted to him showed that some pupils find it difficult to identify numbers while many can neither read nor solve simple mathematical questions.

Also, a Senior Education Officer at the British High Commission, Abuja, Ian Attfield, expressed satisfaction with the release of the kidnapped Kuriga students.

He said it is really important that Nigeria takes some drastic and coordinated efforts to address some of the problems posted as the deepest challenges that are faced by the education sector.

“It will be extremely difficult to make progress with children, teachers and parents when they don’t feel that schools are safe places,” he said.

### **We’ll initiate measures to improve soldiers’ welfare – Senate panel**

The Senate Committee on Army has hailed the military for rescuing 137 abducted students in Kaduna, saying it would initiate legislative measures aimed at improving the welfare and well-being of soldiers in the country.

Chairman of the committee, Senator Abdulaziz Yar’adua, in a statement on Monday, said the release of the pupils as well as the recent rescue operation in Gada LGA of Sokoto State, where 16 pupils (Almajiris) and a woman were freed from captivity showed that the Nigerian military were committed to keeping Nigeria safe.

### **ACF calls for proactive measures**

The Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) has expressed delight over the return of the abducted schoolchildren in Kaduna and Sokoto states and some of the ‘long-held’ students of Federal University, Gusau (FUGUS).

The ACF, in a statement by its National Publicity Secretary, Professor Tukur Muhammad-Baba said “The development hopefully signals a new dawn in anti-terrorism measures being applied by the government.”

It then called on the government to put in place proactive measures against further occurrences.