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Jonathan seeks Senate's nod to borrow N150b over insurgency

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- Chibok girls' parents fault President on visit

- 27 feared killed in fresh Borno attack

PRESIDENT Goodluck Jonathan Wednesday forwarded a request to the National Assembly, seeking an urgent approval of about N150 billion (\$1b) external loan to combat Boko Haram activities in Nigeria.

Besides, the Federal Government Wednesday inaugurated a 26-member Victims Support Fund Committee. The panel is headed by former Minister of Defence, Gen. Theophilus Yakubu Danjuma (rtd).

Wednesday, parents and relatives of some of the abducted schoolgirls demanded that Jonathan meets everyone affected, describing a hastily-arranged plan for a visit with a select few as offensive.

Meanwhile, gunmen suspected of members of Boko Haram sect on Tuesday attacked Sabon Gari village in Damboa Council of Borno State, killing 27 people and injuring 18 others.

Sabon Gari village is on Maiduguri-Biu road, and 150 kilometres south of Maiduguri, the state capital.

Also, authorities of Lassa General Hospital and members of Dille Volunteer

Vigilante Group (DVVG) in Borno State have disclosed that following the discovery of 12 more bodies, the death toll in last Monday's attacks in some villages in the state has shot up to 57.

In a letter dated July 15, 2014 and addressed to the Senate President, David Mark, Jonathan said the external loan was urgently needed to upgrade equipment, training and logistics of the

Armed Forces and security services to enable them forcefully confront the insurgents in the country.

On the request for loan, the letter titled, Tackling Ongoing Security Challenges: Need for Urgent Action, further reads: "You are no doubt cognizant of the ongoing and serious security challenges which the nation is facing, as typified by the Boko Haram terrorist threat. This is an issue that we have discussed at various times.

"I would like to bring to your attention the urgent need to upgrade the equipment, training and logistics of our Armed Forces and Security Services to enable them more forcefully confront this serious threat.

"For this reason, I seek the concurrence of the National Assembly for external borrowing of not more than \$1 billion dollars including government to government arrangements for this upgrade".

The National Assembly had in 2014 Budget, appropriated N968.127 billion for addressing Boko Haram insurgency.

While inaugurating the panel, at the Council Chambers shortly before the Federal Executive Council (FEC), Jonathan re-assured Nigerians that the activities of the Boko Haram insurgents would be brought to an end, noting that it was a matter of time.

The President said: "We have set up this committee to provide a framework through which all persons and institutions who wish to help mitigate the pains our country men and women are going through for no fault of theirs. He therefore, charged the committee members to go out there and knock on the doors of all hearts and institutions in a determined and focused way.

"There are good people who do not share the dangerous doctrine they are propagating. Those who have made it their priority to kill and maim think they can break our spirit. We will rise from this triumphantly and we shall shame evil.

The Victims Support Fund Committee would help to mobilise collective efforts and resources in support for the victims. I appeal to all well-meaning Nigerians and non-Nigerians, individuals and corporate bodies, to give generously to this Fund. The victims need our sympathy and empathy. We have to show that we care and can never give way or give in to agents of evil.

The committee's terms of reference include among others; identify sources and ways of raising sustainable funding to support victims of terror activities; develop appropriate strategies for the fund raising; ascertain the persons, communities, facilities and economic assets affected by terror activities; assess and determine the appropriate support required in each case, among others.

In his speech, Danjuma expressed concern that not only have the terrorists sustained their vicious campaign against the larger society but that they appeared to be gaining upper hand in their activities, saying it was sending a wrong signal to Nigerians about the administration.

More than three months after the girls were abducted in Chibok, Jonathan has not met the parents of the hostages or with any of the 57 girls who have escaped.

Visiting Nigeria this week to campaign for the girls' release, Pakistani education activist Malala Yousafzai, who survived a 2012 assassination attempt by the Taliban, urged Jonathan to hold face-to-face talks with those touched by the abductions.

A meeting scheduled for Tuesday was called off at the last minute, with the presidency saying the families had been manipulated by activists who are exploiting the hostage crisis to damage Jonathan politically.

But Chibok community leaders told AFP that if Jonathan truly wants to make amends for his disappointing response to the abductions, he should visit the town, or, at the very least, bring all the victims to Abuja.

"It is embarrassing that the president had to wait for Malala to come all the way to Nigeria to convince him to meet with us three months after the attack," said Dauda Iliya, a member of the Chibok panel of elders.

"We deserve a visit by the president," he added, saying that if Jonathan cannot go to the remote northeastern town for security reasons, he can bring "all the 219 mothers to meet with him. This meeting should not be selective."

Jonathan had scheduled a visit to Chibok in May but called it off at the last minute, without providing an explanation.

Jonathan on Monday asked to meet a small delegation of parents and escapees who were selected by Chibok leaders to travel to Abuja to greet Malala.

Chibok residents said the group would have faced significant backlash at home had they met the president.

"It would have been a big insult to those of us who were not present," said a father of a girl who was kidnapped, requesting anonymity.

Jonathan spokesman, Doyin Okupe charged that the group had been co-opted by the Bring

Back Our Girls campaign, which includes some of the president's political opponents.

Okupe told journalists the presidency had formally asked victims to meet Jonathan next week, but the venue and number invited was not immediately clear.

A relation to a slain victim, Iiyasu Ibrahim told The Guardian that his cousin was among those killed in the invasion, adding that his house was torched and five bags of grains were also stolen by the insurgents.

However, efforts to confirm the incident from the Borno State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Gideon Jubrin proved abortive, but a top security source who is not allowed to speak said: "More than 20 people were killed on Tuesday and Wednesday multiple attacks on Sabon Gari village by suspected armed hoodlums."

Also speaking yesterday on the number of persons killed in Dille village, a vigilante member, Kirndah Muthavu, said that some villagers were still missing because there were complaints that some residents had not yet been found.

An attendant at Lassa Hospital, who spoke under anonymity, confirmed that 12 fresh corpses were brought to the hospital.



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