

Kidnapped victim who helped two others escape feared dead

From Danjuma Michael, Katsina

A MIDDLE-aged man who was kidnapped along with 19 others some days ago in Katsina State has been reportedly killed after he helped two female abductees escape from the kidnappers' den at the weekend.

It was gathered that the man and the two women who endured a harrowing experience while in captivity, had been left in the hands of a lone gun-wielding teenage bandit, while the rest of the bandits had gone for an operation.

Realising that an opportunity to escape had presented

itself, one of the women tricked the bandit to come help her kill a supposed snake and while he was going about it, the male abductee rushed from behind and grabbed him, and a scuffle ensued.

Luckily, the scuffle allowed the two women to escape but the women moments later heard several gunshots as they escaped from the forest, which raised concern over the safety of the middle-aged man who secured their escape.

Security operatives at the weekend were said to have scouted the area where the incident took place, but have

been unable to sight the man nor his dead body, which has raised fears that the worst may have happened to him.

One of the women, Ramatu Yakubu, who spoke with newsmen, said that they plotted to deceive the bandit guarding them in the forest in order to escape.

Yakubu said she deceived the man "to come over a rock and help me kill a snake. Reaching there, the other man that we planned with followed behind, grabbed and him pressed him down on the rock and I took cutlass to hit him and we escaped; he started

shooting because already he was holding a gun."

The three victims are among 20 passengers traveling from Minna, Niger State to Katsina, who were kidnapped by bandits at Maraban Kankara, Kankara local council at about 9:00p.m. on March 22. The bandits, who had dressed in security outfits, bundled the passengers into the forest, but 17 of them were later released in batches, with the first and second batch released at the end of March.

Receiving the freed women, the Secretary to the Government of the State, Mustapha

Inuwa, said their rescue was made possible by combined efforts of state government, security operatives and repentant bandits.

"So far, out of the 20 victims, 19 are back and have been reunited with their families; from the remaining three, we have two now and only one is not rescued yet. We are working towards getting him back if he is still alive. Like the security operatives that brought the two girls said, they will join the repentant bandits to search for him," he added.

Meanwhile, the Nasarawa State police command says it

has arrested 18 suspects over an alleged connection with the kidnap of three persons in different parts of the state. The state Commissioner of Police, Bola Longe, disclosed this in an interview with newsmen on Sunday in Lafia.

He said there had not been any case of kidnapping in the state for a long time except recently when three persons were kidnapped in different locations in the state. Longe said all three victims were rescued alive, while the suspects were apprehended for allegedly being responsible for their abduction.

WADIA ... after 64% increase in

Cleric killed in botched kidnap by herdsmen in Delta