

# Families of kidnapped train passengers protest govt inaction as another victim dies of gunshot injuries

From **Saxone Akhaine** (Kaduna),  
**Joko Falaju** (Abuja) and **Danjuma**  
**Michael** (Katsina)

ONE of the victims of last week's terrorists' attack on a Kaduna-bound train, Sergeant Muhammad Haruna Funtua, has died from injuries sustained in the assault.

The ex-soldier was shot on the head and chest before he was rescued by security agencies who were mobilised to the scene of the train attack at Dutse forest in Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

It was gathered that he was later discharged from the 44 Army Reference Hospital in Kaduna and conveyed to his hometown in Funtua for further treatment where he finally gave up the ghost.

A source, who identified himself as Mallam Idris, disclosed that the ex-service man died on Tuesday night.

The terrorists had on Wednesday released the Managing Director of the Bank of Agriculture (BoA), Alwan Ali-Hassan and threatened to kill others in their captivity, numbering over 100, if the Federal Government failed to yield to its demands, one of which is the release of their captured leaders.

Eleven days after the attack, families of the victims have protested the prolonged silence by the Federal Government on the release of their loved ones. Some of the family members, numbering about 20, stormed the venue of a scheduled ministerial press briefing by the Ministry of Transportation, demanding that the government expedite action to aid the freedom of the captives.

The family members, who could hardly hold back their tears, came carrying placards. They expressed concern over government's prolonged silence, saying since the mishap of March 28, there has been no official communication to them as to what happened and what is being done by the authorities.

- Terrorists still contacting families to demand ransom
- Pastors protest attack, killings by terrorists in Kaduna
- Bandits kill businessman, abduct daughter, others in Katsina
- Your days are numbered, Defence Chief, Irabor warns terrorists

They also expressed worry about the selective release of victims, wondering why of all over 160 passengers unaccounted for, it was only the Managing Director of the Bank of Industry that was released.

The *Guardian* yesterday gathered that the bandits have reached out to some of the family members demanding between N5 million and N100 million, depending on the pedigree of the victims and negotiating power, but the victims' relatives are insisting that the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) must be responsible for the ransom.

A family member, Hajija Idayat Yusuf, whose two sisters were kidnapped, lamented that some of the passengers ranged from pregnant women, diabetic patients and many others with various health challenges, who need to take their medications.

She said: "For the last 10 days, we have been traumatised, we can't sleep. Though we are fasting, we are doing it abnormally. This is why we are begging the government to come to our aid, government should do something. We were trying to protect ourselves, that was why we entered the train in the first place. We believed government would protect us on the train ride but here we are, it is really a national embarrassment and disaster."

"While we sympathise with families that have lost their loved ones and sympathise with those still in the hospitals, let them not forget those that are still alive and in the bush. Government, please bring them back."

Another relative of victims, Aminu Lawal Othman, said his immediate younger brother and his wife were kidnapped and it has really been a nightmare in the last

10 days.

He said the bandits called the following day of the mishap and gave their loved ones the phone to confirm they were actually with the terrorists, but no ransom has been demanded yet.

Another distraught relative who pleaded for anonymity, said: "After the attack, my family was worried about the safety of my in-law, who was on the train. We were not sure if she made it out alive, was killed or was abducted. We had no information on her situation for the first few days after the attack until the kidnappers later reached out to us to make their demands."

The Minister of Transportation, Rotimi Amaechi and the Managing Director of NRC, Fidelis Okhiria, were absent from the ministerial briefing for undisclosed reasons. However, the Minister of State for Transportation, Gbemi Saraki, who was waylaid on arrival at the press centre, came down from her vehicle to sympathise with the victims.

She told them to keep praying as government is doing all it could to ensure the safe release of their loved ones.

Terrorists have killed a popular businessman, Sale Auta, at Gidan Dauda village, in Kankara Local Government Area of Katsina State. The terrorists also abducted the deceased's teenage daughter, Aisha, along with a dozen other residents of the community. The incident occurred on Wednesday night.

A source in the area said the deceased was at home with some of his associates when the terrorists attacked.

"Auta was at home with some of his associates when the bandits stormed his house and dragged him outside. They shot him dead and went away with his teenage daughter, Aisha. They also went away with many people."

Speaking on the issue, the police command in the state said it had commenced investigation into circumstances surrounding Auta's murder. Spokesman of the

command, SP Gambo Isah, confirmed the development yesterday.

MEANWHILE, irked by continuous attacks and killings in Kaduna, some pastors yesterday took to the streets to protest the incessant mayhem by terrorists.

The clerics, under the banner of the Interfaith Alliance, were spotted around the ever-busy Lagos Roundabout, where they called on the Federal Government to step up actions against bandits.

According to the clerics, though government was doing its best, the best isn't good enough, adding that it is about time for the central government to bomb the bandits out of existence.

They also appealed to the government to compensate all the victims of bandits' attacks, award scholarships to children affected by banditry and rebuild communities ravaged by attacks.

This, the convener of the Interfaith Alliance, Reverend Emmanuel Adebayo, said would ameliorate sufferings of victims and make them overcome the psychological trauma they are going through.

With the hash-tag: #KadunaPrays, Adebayo said the government should be

more proactive in whatever actions that are being taken against the terrorists.

HOWEVER, the Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Lucky Irabor, has warned terrorists troubling Kaduna State that their days are numbered. Irabor also restated the resolve of Nigeria's military to restore peace in Southern Kaduna.

He made this known in Kafanchan yesterday during a peace meeting with stakeholders involved in the Southern Kaduna crisis.

Southern Kaduna has become a hotbed of deadly attacks by terrorists in recent months. In some quarters in Southern Kaduna, over 100 persons were killed following repeated attacks on several communities in the area.

He said: "We are committed to ensuring that peace is restored in this part of the country. However, for those who do not want to heed to our appeal for peace and who think that violence is what they need to unleash on us, I am here to tell them that their days are numbered."

"If the peace in Southern Kaduna is disrupted, the peace in Kaduna and indeed the peace in Nigeria will be disrupted because Kaduna is central to the existence of Nigeria," he declared.



Former President of the Senate, Dr. Abubakar Bukola Saraki (right), hosting the former British High Commissioner, Paul Thomas Arkwright and his delegation to Iftar, at his home in Abuja... yesterday.