

National

One dies as police rescue 58 kidnap victims near Abuja

By Oditia Sunday, Abuja

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*[FILES] Nigeria Police*

Residents, experts blame force

Fears over insecurity in Abuja hit the roof, yesterday, as police rescued no fewer than 58 kidnap victims, even as one of the victims died during a gunfight between the police and bandits.

However, residents and civil rights advocacy groups flayed the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) over attacks in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), especially in the last one year.

According to the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), SP Josephine Adeh, the FCT Police Command rescued the kidnap victims from Udulu Forest, Gugu Local

Council of Kogi State, bordering Sardauna Forest, Nasarawa State, and other identified kidnappers' dens in communities contiguous to the FCT.

She said: "The bandits, on sighting the security team coordinated by the police, fired at the team, which resulted in a duel. Overpowered, they escaped with bullet injuries, leaving behind their victims.

"The rescue is part of efforts by the command, in a sustained joint operation with other security agencies, vigilante groups and hunters from the various communities, to combat violent crimes in the FCT, rescue victims and bring perpetrators to book."

The Commissioner of Police, FCT, Haruna Garba, The Guardian gathered, vowed to prevent any further threat to the security of residents.

He called for the cooperation of residents, especially in being security-conscious and giving credible information to the police.

"Meanwhile, one Tama Jonathan, unfortunately, sustained injury during the rescue operation and died on the spot. His remains have subsequently been released to his family for burial. The other 58 rescued victims are being stabilised in the hospital and would be reunited with their families," the PPRO added.

A security expert, Dr. Wilson Esangbedo, said: "Abuja is honestly not safe. Criminal incidents occur daily, but many of them are not reported. One should exercise caution and be security-conscious as one moves around Abuja area.

"The presence of forests around Abuja presents hideouts for the kidnappers. Happy, the law enforcement agencies are taking the fight to them in their hideouts. This is what they should have done before now and not waiting till the end of the tenure of this administration to act. It is never too late to act against these criminal elements."

Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria, (HURIWA) also flayed the force over kidnappings and killings in Abuja, especially in the last one year.

The National Coordinator, Emmanuel Onwubiko, said it is condemnable that the police failed to secure the 36 states of the federation and the FCT, the seat of power.

HURIWA said despite the presence of the Force Headquarters (FHQ) in Abuja and the headquarters of the military and paramilitary agencies, bandits continue to have a field day in Abuja.

But security analyst, Chidi Omeje, said: "Abuja is safe to the extent that the possibility of government declaring emergency there is quite remote. Despite the recent security infractions in the area, it remains one of the safest parts of Nigeria. With the presence of the elite military squad called Guards Brigade and several other security outfits headquartered in Abuja, one can confidently say that it is safe and this is despite the sundry security infractions that might occur here and

there within the city. No city is immune to contemporary security challenges arising from peculiar internal contradictions.”

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