

# Reps, Al condemn kidnap epidemic as bandits abduct dozens of Kaduna school pupils

From Sazone Akhaine, AbdulGaniyu Alabi (Kaduna), Ibrahim Obansa (Lokoja) and Daniel Okojeme (Abuja)

**I**N a repeat of mass abductions in the North since the infamous April 2014 Chibok schoolgirls kidnapping, bandits yesterday attacked a government primary school at Kuriga community of Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State, abducting scores of pupils.

An unspecified number of pupils and teachers were reportedly abducted by terrorists during an attack on the school. Residents said the gunmen invaded the school immediately after morning assembly. The community is located along the Kaduna-Birnin-Gwari road that has been terrorised by bandits for many years.

At least 100 of the pupils and some of the school's teachers are believed to have been abducted, a resident said, asking not to be named for security reasons.

The source said the bandits invaded the school at 8:30am riding on motorcycles and took away many pupils including the head teacher. He said that many students sustained injuries as they attempted to flee the school on sighting the bandits and one pupil was killed in the process. The students were between the ages of eight and 15.

The source said: "The bandits came when the assembly was almost over, surrounded the whole school and forcefully carted away more than 200 students from the primary and secondary sections, including one teacher. The gunmen also shot one boy during

- Teacher narrates how terrorists invaded school, abducted 280 students
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the operation and was rushed to hospital by the school authority for treatment."

When *The Guardian* called the Chief Press Secretary to the governor, Muhammed Lawal Shehu, he said: "We are on our way to the village. Please chat me up on WhatsApp, I will respond." There was no further comment on the matter after.

Civil rights activist and former lawmaker, Senator Shehu Sani, while reacting to the incident said, "it is tragic to hear that 232 students have just been kidnapped in Kuriga village, Chikun Local Government Area in Kaduna State."

Sani's reaction was on his X handle (former Twitter), saying that "it's the same village where a school principal, Idris Sufyan, was killed and his wife kidnapped over a month ago. However, I'm optimistic their freedom will be secured."

The Kaduna State Government is yet to speak on the incident. Attempts to reach the Commissioner, Ministry of Internal Security and Home Affairs, Samuel Aruwan, were not successful.

The police spokesperson in the state, ASP Mansir Hassan, confirmed the incident, noting that the number of the victims abducted had not yet been ascertained.

"It's true kidnapping occurred, presently we have deployed additional security personnel to the bush to res-

cue the victims.

"All the security agencies in the state, police, military, Vigilante and other security agencies have put their heads together and are presently in that bush working hard to rescue the victims," he added. Three weeks ago, a wanted kidnapper and ruthless killer, Jyaku Boderi, was killed by security forces in the Chikun local government with some of his lieutenants. It was not immediately clear whether Thursday's incident was connected to his killing.

Boderi allegedly led the March 11, 2021 abduction of 39 students of the Federal College of Forestry Mechanisation, and the August 24, 2021 deadly attack on a campus of the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA), both in Afaka, Igabi LGA of Kaduna State.

Bandit attacks in the North-west part of the country have been on the increase in recent times, with residents taking to the streets to protest the ugly trend. On Tuesday, residents of Kankara Local Government Area in Katsina State embarked on yet another protest over incessant bandit attacks in their community.

A teacher of Government Secondary School, Kuriga, Sani Abdullahi, has narrated how bandits invaded the joint secondary and primary school and whisked away about 280 pupils and teachers. He gave the account when the governor, Senator Uba Sani, led senior govern-

ment officials and security top brass to the scene of the kidnapping attack Thursday evening.

According to him: "I resumed at exactly 7:47am. I entered the Acting Principal's office and signed. All of a sudden, the Acting Principal asked me to look at my back and when I turned, we discovered that bandits had surrounded the school premises. We became confused, we didn't know where to go. Then, the bandits asked us to enter the bush, so we obeyed them because they were many and the pupils were about 700 following us. So, when we entered the bush, I was lucky to escape alongside many other people.

"So, I returned to the village and reported what happened to the community. So, immediately our vigilante and personnel of KADVS followed the bandits, but the vigilante did not succeed, in fact, the bandits killed one of the vigilante, we just buried him a shore hike ago.

"It was when we came back from that pursuit that we briefed the Village Head and we started making efforts to know the actual number of pupils and teachers taken away by the bandits.

"At GSS Kuriga, 187 students are presently missing. In the primary school, 125 pupils were initially missing, but, 25 of them escaped and returned home," he narrated.

Meanwhile, in his reaction, Sani said: "In my capacity as your governor, I am assuring you that, by the grace of God, all the children will return unhurt. Before coming here, I spoke with the National Security Adviser (NSA), Nuhu Ribadu, and we are making

efforts, the security forces have swung into action and by God's grace, we will rescue the children.

"We will do whatever we need to do to ensure safe return of these children, even if it means coming to Kuriga to stay with you. The essence of government is protection of citizens' lives and property. We recognize the fact that we are holding this position in trust for the people and by God's grace, we will protect the citizens' rights."

While addressing the community members, Governor Sani also promised to establish a Police Station and build a permanent camp for the military in the community.

**M**EANWHILE, the House of Representatives on Thursday called on security agencies to free 300 women kidnapped in Borno State while fetching firewood in the bush. Moving a motion on matter of urgent public

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Lagos State Head of Service, Olabode Agoro (left); Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun and Osun State Governor, Ademola Adeleke, during the Zonal Public Hearing on National Minimum Wage in Lagos... yesterday.

PHOTO: AYODELE ADENIRAN