

• Vice President Namadi Sambo (right), FCT Minister Bala Mohammed (second right) and other dignitaries praying during the funeral prayers for Chief Imam of Abuja National Mosque in Abuja...yesterday.

Boko Haram: Women 'fire at soldiers on rescue mission'

WOMEN taken hostage in the Sambisa Forest opened fire on soldiers who tried to rescue them, it was learnt yesterday.

The women - apparently forced by the terror sect into acting as conscripts - shot at the unsuspecting troops when they staged an operation to free them from the remote village of Nbita in the Northeast last week.

Seven soldiers were killed in the ensuing gunfight, in which a dozen of the women also died, according to offi-

cial sources who spoke to the Associated Press (AP) on the condition of anonymity because they are not authorised to speak to the media.

The captive women were among nearly 700 women and girls who have been rescued from Boko Haram hideouts in the vast Sambisa forest in recent days.

They are now being looked after at the Malkohi Internally Displaced Persons' (IDPs') camp, outside Yola, where many are showing signs of severe trauma and exhaustion. They were taken into the

camp on Saturday after the military released them to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

A number of the children also have distended stomachs and tinted orange hair - which are signs of malnutrition.

Government officials said the women were being used as cooks, sex slaves and human shields in the Boko Haram camps.

Many are believed to have been abducted during raids on villages in which hundreds of menfolk were killed.

"Boko Haram killed the father of this child," sobbed Lami Musa, a mother of four who was cradling a four-day-old girl at one displaced persons' camp. "I have no idea where my other children are."

Many of the hostages were in such a distressed state when they were found that they had no idea whether their rescuers meant them good or harm.

Government officials are trying to determine where the women and children are

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