

## 'Driver shot dead, body burnt before abducted Ekiti pupils'



Ekiti State Governor Biodun Oyebanji with a released teacher and pupil of The Apostolic Nursery and Primary School, Emure at the Ekiti State University Teaching Hospital (EKSU) in Ado-Ekiti...yesterday



Rasaq Ibrahim, Ado-Ekiti February 5, 2024



- *Parents: we paid ransom, made to walk long distance in the forest*

Kidnappers shot Taye Rasaki, the driver of the Apostolic Faith Group Schools in Ekiti State in the presence of the abducted children, a parent said yesterday.

The abductors  
set his body  
ablaze.

The parent said the children and teachers were freed after N15 million, food, tramadol, milk and hard drinks were handed over to the abductors as ransom.

The gunmen on Monday ambushed a bus conveying the schoolchildren and staff members home at Eporo and whisked nine of the occupants away.

The kidnappers demanded N100 million to free each of them but later reduced it to N15 million for all of them.

In the early hours of yesterday, the victims were freed after the ransom was paid.

Ekiti State Police spokesman, Sunday Abutu, dismissed the payment of ransom as "just a rumour", adding, "we are not aware"

One of the parents, who pleaded not to be named, said N15 million was paid along with other items demanded.

He said: "We had challenges locating them. When we first entered the forest, we spent about two hours without seeing the kidnappers.

"We had to go back and forth before we saw those who asked us to bring the money.

“They took us into the bush that was far from where we parked the motorcycle that we took there.

“We gave them what they demanded and they released the pupils and teachers to us.

“Nine persons were kidnapped, but eight persons were released; we didn’t see the ninth person.

“As they collected the money, they said we should run off.

“I cannot say specifically the location in the forest. It is between Ondo and Ekiti states.

“We entered around Ago Panu along Owo-Ikare Road in Ondo State and went deep into the expansive forest.

“When they released the victims to us, I embraced my family members. I thank God for the reunion, for surviving the torture and hunger. It was one of them who said that they shot the driver dead.”

On why the driver was killed, the parent said: “The children told us that they (kidnappers) asked for the phone number of relatives to call from each of them in the forest.

“The driver told them he didn’t know that of his wife and school proprietor off-hand. This made them angry and they hit him with their gun.

“For five days, he was writhing in pains from the injury he sustained. On Saturday morning, he was shot dead and painfully, his body was burnt to ashes.

“It was a bitter and terrifying experience for the little children, especially looking at how the driver was killed.”

A grandparent said she was glad to have her three grandchildren back.

She said: “My joy knows no bounds. When I saw my children, we held one another in long embrace and we all wept especially when I saw the condition they were in.

“I went to the bush with the search party for the rescue. It was along Owo-Ikare Road in Ondo State.

“Initially, I didn’t want to go because of my leg, but on a second thought, given that my three grandchildren were involved, I chose to go.

“The kidnappers were calling persistently that we should hurry up. They said we should meet them at Ikare Junction.

“I wondered how come Ikare junction when they took the children at Eporo?

“When we got to Ikare Junction, he said we should buy food, so we went to buy rice and meat.

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“When we were about to get to Waterworks, he called that we should turn back, and then the kidnapper described a road that only big vehicles could pass.

“We decided that all of us should not go there so that they would not think that we came with security agents that could make them injure the abductees with them.

“When we told them we were on the path, he said only two persons should come.

“He threatened to waste the kidnapped persons if more than two persons came. The rest of us sat on the road there.

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"The driver of the vehicle and one person continued far into the forest and drove back.

"So, they now used a motorbike to trace the kidnappers to drop the money and the food.

"On collecting the money, food and other items, he released the kidnapped pupils and their teachers.

"They used motorbike to bring the abductees to the road, it was then they called us to bring the vehicle to convey them.

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"The kidnappers collected N15million. We the parents contributed N4million, and people came to our aid by contributing. Even in the markets, they contributed so that they would be rescued."

## Pupils, staff undergo trauma treatment

The pupils and their teachers were brought to the hospital from Emure Ekiti by the Commissioner for Health and Human Services, Dr Oyebanji Filani, and some ministry officials.

EKSUTH Chief Medical Director, Prof Kayode Olabanji, said they were undergoing medical and trauma treatment.

He added the survivors were clinically in stable conditions.

Olabanji said: "They have been attended to by a multi-disciplinary team of medical personnel.

"We brought in psychologists who could work on them to allay their fears.

"They were given the initial resuscitation including rehydration. Some who needed oxygen were given oxygen.

"After they had stabilised a bit, they were given food too.

"Now they are much better, we will still carry out a few investigations to fully appraise their situation.

"But I can say with confidence that they are clinically stable and we don't foresee any untoward eventuality."

## Oyebanji: perpetrators will be brought to justice

Ekiti State Governor, Biodun Oyebanji, kept vigil with Senate Leader, Senator Opeyemi Bamidele till 3.00 am to ensure the release of the children.

He acknowledged the solidarity shown by governors, former governors of the state, religious leaders and traditional rulers.

A statement by his Special Adviser on Media, Mr. Yinka Oyeode, reads: "He also thanks members of the Ekiti State Caucus in the National Assembly and members of the state House of Assembly for their support, saying, 'And more importantly, we thank God for everything'."

Oyebanji condoled with the family of the late driver, assuring that the perpetrators of the crime would be apprehended and brought to book.

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Oyebanji was at EKSUTH to interact with each of the victims at the Accident and Emergency Ward of the hospital.

Expressing his condolences over the death of the bus driver, the governor said: "It is very sad. My condolences to the family.

"I have directed the Deputy Governor to pay a visit to the family and to the Elemure to commiserate with them.

"But what I can assure Ekiti people is that we will go after the criminals."

Police: investigation ongoing

Contrary to the account given by parents, who spoke to reporters, Abutu said the victims were rescued through the combined efforts of security agents, including policemen, Amotekun Corps, local vigilantes and hunters.

He said the eight victims have been handed to the state government for medical treatment.

Abutu said: "All victims were rescued at about 1:30 am but unfortunately, we lost the driver who was killed by the abductors.

"While we sympathise with the family members of the driver who is suspected to have been killed while in hostage, the Command vows to continue with the operation and investigation until the perpetrators are arrested and made to face the full wrath of the law.

"The operation shall continue as we want to ensure that the perpetrators are apprehended and made to face the full wrath of the law."