

**I**t was a bloody day in Ajide forest, Benue State on Friday as security agents swooped on the gunmen who had been holding 20 medical students of the Universities of Jos and Maiduguri captive.

The abductors had demanded a N50million ransom to free the victims but the government was not prepared to meet such a demand.

Force became inevitable and a shootout soon ensued.

It was not clear yesterday who fired the first shot, but by the time the dust settled, one of the bandits had been gunned down and two others captured by the security team comprising soldiers, members of the Police Special Squad and Department of State Security (DSS) operatives.

All the victims were rescued alive nine days after they were seized on the Otukpo-Enugu Highway.

# Abductor killed, two captured in rescue operation of 20 medical students

• Victims moved to Abuja • UNIJOS VC says it's the Lord's doing  
• Recounts how varsity raised altar, prayed for students' release

From Uja Emmanuel, Makurdi;  
Kolade Adeyemi, Jos; Gbenga  
Omokhunu, Abuja

They were moved to Abuja yesterday by the Office of the National Security Adviser which co-ordinated the rescue operation for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) treatment.

They were Enugu bound on the fateful day to participate in the annual convention of the Federation of Catholic Medical and Dental Students before

they ran into the gunmen that abducted them.

A security source confirmed the death of the kidnapper and the arrest of two others.

The Nation gathered that the security operatives had massed around Ado and Okpokwu Local Government Area where the forest is located preparatory to their storming the kidnappers den.

Deployed to assist them in the operation were drones and helicopters.

The Benue State Police Command broke the news of

the rescue late Friday but gave no details.

The Chief spokesman for the Police Olumuyiwa Adejobi said yesterday that no ransom was paid for the freedom of the victims.

Olumuyiwa, in a terse statement on his X handle @Princemoyel said: "We confirm the release of our brothers and sisters and some other Nigerians who have been in captivity on Friday 23rd August 2024 in Ntunkon forest, Benue State. Without any

ransom paid. Contrary to some tweets and unconfirmed stories that some money was paid, no kobo was paid to release them. They were actually rescued tactically and professionally. We commend the security agencies, locals, and ONSA for their commitment and resilience. Thanks to you all. More details soon."

## UNIJOS VC: It's the Lord's doing

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Jos, Prof. Tanko Ishaya was all joy yesterday as he savoured the rescue of his students.

"Absolutely. We've been very, very glad since last night when we received that good news," he said on phone yesterday.

He added: "It is a great, great relief for the university management and of course the parents, who had been suffering psychological trauma, and all the students themselves. It was quite a great relief for us."

Asked how he felt when the news of the rescue first reached him, he said: "Of course, when we got the information, some of us stayed on until we were sure and told that all the students were actually with the security agencies."

He said no ransom was paid to the gunmen.

He expressed gratitude to the federal government, the NSA and the security agents for getting the students freed.

He looked forward to seeing the students and taking them "straight to the Jos University Teaching Hospital to make sure that they are medically and psychologically revived and stabilised before they are integrated back into the society and into the university system."

On his reacting to the abduction, he said: "when we heard about the kidnap issue, the first thing that came to my minds was, what do we do to get this students out? Immediately, the first thing that we did was to go and report to the security agencies."

"But beyond the efforts of the security, we raised a prayer altar, and we kept praying that nothing harmful should befall these students and when we got in touch with the various security agencies, they kept giving us assurances, particularly myself (the Vice Chancellor), as we kept on discussing with the team from the security adviser's office, STF Commander, DSS directors, the Police."

"They kept giving us assurances, that by the grace of God nothing would happen to them and we were just praying and hoping the students would be released. The security agencies kept their promises, and our students have been released. And to the best of my knowledge, no ransom was paid for their release."

• From left: Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bekefula; representative of the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, Charity Elisha; Director-General, ECOWAS Food and Cultural Festival (EFCF), Felix Ibore; representative of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Oladunjoye Musiliu; representative of the Controller-General, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Idris Jibrin and representative of the Director, International Cultural Relations Department, Federal Ministry of Art, Culture and Creative Economy, Nseno Emiem, during the unveiling of the forthcoming 2024 ECOWAS Food and Cultural Festival in Abuja on Friday.



## Shaibu still locked out of office despite reinstatement by FHC

• Edo govt claims Court of Appeal yet to deliver ruling

Philip Shaibu, remains locked out of office as

From Bisi Olaniyi, Southsouth