

Police, army arrest kidnapers, other crime suspects

•Man rapes, kills woman fetching firewood

Biola Azeez and Isaac Shobayo

THE Kwara State police command has paraded 28 suspected criminals, including kidnapers, armed robbers and ritualists.

Parading the suspects at the command's headquarters in Ilorin Thursday evening, the state Commissioner of Police, Victor Olaiya, lamented that kidnapping for ransom had become a prevalent crime in the state.

The police boss, who said that a total of 78 kidnap suspects that were arrested from October 2023 to date were currently at different correctional facilities in the state with pending cases, added that 18 kidnap suspects were among the 28 suspects being paraded.

He said exhibits recovered from suspected kidnapers included a sum of N6.4 million cash, two locally made guns, 12 7.62mm AK-47 live ammunition, eight expended 7.62mm AK-47 ammunition, one empty magazine, one cutlass and several plugs, one locally made cut-to-size single-barrel gun, one cutlass, one Itel phone without SIM and battery, a stick, seven mobile phones of assorted brands and two wristwatches.

Parading a three-man kidnap gang among the suspects, the CP said his men on a stop-and-search operation on Bode Saadu Road, on February 20, 2024, at about 11:50am, intercepted three young individuals who were occupants of a commercial vehicle.

"These individuals have been identified as Umar Usman, Mustapha Mohammed and Abubakar Kugu. During a thorough search conducted

on the suspects, the operatives recovered a cash sum of N6.4 million, seven assorted types of mobile phones and two wristwatches. The suspects could not provide a satisfactory account of the items found in their possession.

"In the course of investigation, the suspects confessed to the crime of kidnapping. Umar Usman admitted that he belonged to a gang of kidnapers operating in Yauri, Kebbi State. He further stated that the money recovered from him was his share of their recent operation, wherein the gang received a ransom of N10 million from a victim named Alhaji Abdullahi Mohammed.

"Similarly, Mustapha Mohammed confessed that the money found in his possession was his share from the ransom received from the kidnapping of a resident of Bida, Niger State.

The commissioner said that investigations were underway to unravel more information regarding the past exploits of the criminal gang with a view to recovering firearms used during their operations and apprehending other members of the gang. "Thereafter, they will be arraigned in court," he added.

Also, in a case of rape and culpable homicide, one Atolagbe Yemi, male, was paraded for alleged rape and killing of one Mayowa Ajiboye, female, in Omu Aran in Irepodun Local Government Area of the state.

The suspect was said to have raped the victim after which he cut some hair from her private part and cleaned the semen and blood from her private part with a white handkerchief for money ritual purpose.

"The facts of the case are that sometime in the month

of November 2023, one Mayowa Ajiboye 'female' of Ile Aro Olola, Aran-Orin, via Omu-Aran, contracted and gave the sum of N1,600 to one Atolagbe Yemi Oje 'male' of Iloko Compound Aran-Orin via, Omu-Aran, Kwara State, to procure firewood for her. But since then Atolagbe Yemi Oje did not supply the requested firewood.

"On 22/2/24, Mayowa Ajiboye and her young daughter named Ope went to gather firewood in the bush and there in the bush she met Atolagbe Yemi Oje who had earlier promised to gather firewood for her since last year, 2023.

"Immediately Atolagbe sighted Mayowa and her daughter, he joined them in gathering some firewood and he asked Mayowa's daughter, one Ope 'female' to carry some of the firewood to where the firewood will be used to cook palm fruit, unknown to Mayowa Ajiboye that the suspect had a sinister motive.

"The suspect asked Mayowa Ajiboye (now deceased) to follow him inside the bush so that they could gather more firewood. When the suspect discovered that they had both gone far into the bush, he suddenly held both legs of Mayowa Ajiboye from behind while she was receiving phone call and fell her down. But Mayowa used the stick in her hand to hit the suspect on his neck in defence but the suspect collected the stick from Mayowa and used it to hit her severely on the head and she fell unconscious.

"The suspect took advantage and raped her after which he cut some hair from her private part, clean the semen 'sperm' and blood from her private part with a white handkerchief for money ritual

purpose.

"The suspect used Mayowa's cutlass to slit her throat and set the remains on fire. Thereafter, he dragged the burnt body to a river to conceal it. He also washed away the blood stains from the cutlass and hid the cutlass. He hid the deceased's phone in the bush while he threw away the SIM, memory card and the battery.

"He confessed that he killed the deceased after raping her to avoid being exposed by the deceased."

Meanwhile, the police commissioner said the suspect would be charged to court as soon as investigation into the case is completed.

The commissioner, who appreciated Governor Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq for his support throughout recent operations, said his dedication to upholding law and order in the state was admirable and had bolstered the efforts of the command.

"I also appreciate the Inspector General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun, whose unwavering support and invaluable counsel have played a pivotal role in our endeavours to combat criminal activities and maintain peace within Kwara State. His guidance and leadership have been an indispensable asset in navigating the challenges we face during the discharge of our duty.

"In the ongoing battle against crime, it is imperative for all citizens to understand the significance of collaboration and support. We implore the public to continue furnishing us with timely and accurate information that can aid in the identification and apprehension of criminals," Olaiya said.

172 arrested in Plateau

In a related development,

Operation Safe Haven (OPSH), the team of the Nigerian Army that is in charge of security in Plateau State and parts of neighbouring Kaduna and Bauchi states, has arrested 271 suspects for offences ranging from kidnapping, armed robbery and gunrunning to banditry, vandalism, farm destruction and other serious crimes within its operational areas.

OPSH also said it dismantled two arms fabrication factories in Mangu and Jos South local government areas of Plateau State.

Addressing newsmen on Friday, the General Officer Commanding, 3rd Armoured Division and Commander of OPSH, Major-General Abdul-salam Abubakar, said a total of 79 civilians were rescued from kidnapers and armed robbers during its recent operations.

The OPSH commander, who was represented by his deputy, Terzungwe Iyela, a Deputy Commissioner of Police, pointed out that 110 different calibers of weapons were recovered and 1,161 pieces of ammunition were recovered from suspected criminals.

He said: "Security agencies also neutralised a total of 13 armed criminals and arrested 271 suspects for offenses related to kidnapping, armed robbery, gunrunning, banditry, farm destruction, vandalism and other sundry crimes. So far, we have prosecuted a total of 33 arrested suspects in court.

According to him, the OPSH personnel, in early February 2024, equally arrested two suspects, Ibrahim Mohammed, 52 years old, and Zaharadeen Ibrahim, 34 years old, identified in a viral video while murdering someone during the crisis in Mangu on January 24, 2024.

General Abubakar added

that a raid on a local weapon fabrication factory on a high ground within Pakachi village in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State produced a suspect, Tapshak Plangi, 25 years old, while the owner of the factory remained at large.

He said the items recovered at the factory included five AK-47 rifles, four AK-47 magazines, 11 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition, five rounds of 9mm ammunition, 21 Dane guns, four revolver rifles, 11 pistols with five magazines, 17 gun barrels, six rounds of 0.44 inch ammunition, a carbide cylinder with accessories, three saws, 12 filing machines, four hammers, six manual drilling machines, two electrically operated filing machines, two G-Clamps, one spraying machine, one Tiger generator and assorted drilling irons.

The OPSH commander also disclosed that on Wednesday, security agencies, in a joint operation, raided a suspected gun manufacturing factory at Gyel community in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State.

He said the owner of the illegal factory escaped but troops recovered seven rifles, six pistols and 15 rounds of different calibers of ammunition.

General Abubakar commended the people of Plateau, Kaduna and Bauchi states for providing credible information and aiding the security operations that were geared towards flushing out criminal elements and their collaborators.

He implored the citizenry to prioritise peace over violence, eschew taking laws into their own hands and ensure that aggrieved persons seek redress through the justice system.