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Tales of Horror by Survivors: Boko Haram stones captives to death

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By Umar Yusuf, with agency reports

YOLA— Survivors of Boko Haram atrocities, rescued from the Sambisa forest by Nigerian troops, arrived Yola, Adamawa state capital, yesterday, with tales of horror of how the terrorists stoned many women and children to death as the military approached to rescue them.

Some of the survivors who were among the 275 women and children rescued and brought to Internally Displaced Persons, IDPs, camp in Malkohi, in the outskirts of Yola also recounted how three of them were blown up by a land mine as they were walking to freedom.

Some of the girls and women who were brought to the refugee camp with tragic stories to tell as they spoke with The Associated Press, yesterday, were finding it hard to believe they were safe, after more than a year in the hands of Islamic extremists.

“We just have to give praise to God that we are alive, those of us who have survived,” said Lami Musa, 27, as she cuddled her five-day-old baby girl. She is among 275 children, girls and women, many bewildered and traumatized, who were getting medical care and being registered on their first day out of the forest.

Musa was in the first group to be transported by road over three days to the safety of Malkohi refugee camp, a deserted school set among baobab trees on the outskirts of Yola.

Musa had given birth to her yet-to-be-named baby last week when the crackle of gunfire gave hint that rescuers might be nearby.

Several girls and women killed

According to her, “Boko Haram came and told us they were moving out and said that we should run away with them. But we

said no. Then they started stoning us. I held my baby to my stomach and doubled over to protect her.”

She and another survivor of the stoning, Salamatu Bulama, said several girls and women were killed, but they do not know exactly how many. Other women died from stray bullets, she said, naming three she knew.

Bulama shielded her face with her veil and cried when she thought about another death in the camp: Her only son, a toddler of two, died of an illness she said was aggravated by malnutrition two months ago.



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“What will I tell my husband?” she sobbed when she learnt from other survivors using borrowed cell phone that her husband was alive and in Kaduna.

This handout picture released by the Nigerian army on April 30, 2015 and taken this week in an undisclosed location in the Sambisa Forest, Borno state, purportedly shows a member of the Nigerian Army standing next to a group of girls rescued in an operation against the Islamist group Boko Haram. Boko Haram hostages were held in atrocious conditions in the group’s Sambisa Forest stronghold, Nigeria’s military said on April 30 after nearly 500 women and girls were released this week. AFP PHOTO

Musa said her husband, the father of the new baby, was killed by Boko Haram when they abducted her from her village of Lassa in December. She doesn’t know the fate of their three other children.

21 girls and women with fractured limbs

At the camp, 21 girls and women with bullet wounds and fractured limbs were taken to the city hospital after they arrived Saturday evening.

On Sunday, officials were collating details of the rescued 61 women and 214 children, almost all girls.

Health workers put critically malnourished babies on intravenous drips, babies whose rib cages and shoulder blades protruded like skeletons were given packs of therapeutic food to suck from.

Through interviews, officials have determined that almost all those rescued are from Gumsuri, a village near the town of Chibok.

None from Chibok

“Based on registration we have carried out so far, none of them is from Chibok,” said Zakari Abubakar, Malkohi camp team leader for the National Emergency Management Agency.

The women and children were rescued by the military from the Sambisa Forest, and had to travel for three days on the open backs of military trucks to reach the safety of Malkohi Camp.

More than 677 women and girls were freed when soldiers destroyed more than a dozen insurgent camps in the forest.

Videos of how troops dislodged Boko Haram terrorists

Meanwhile, the Nigerian military yesterday released videos showing how the troops were dislodging Boko Haram terrorists from the Sambisa forest and the hostages being guided to safety by Nigerian Air Force pilots

In some exclusive videos obtained by PRNigeria, pilots are seen taunting the dislodged and disorganized terrorists who are running helter skelter and fleeing into different directions in the expansive forest.

In another footage, the video depicts how vulnerable women and children were cautiously and deliberately guided to safety by the Nigerian pilots.

An officer involved in the operation said: “Since the essence of the operation is not to kill everybody in sight, the Air Force pilots deploy their skills in herding both terrorists and their captives in different directions so that those conscripted and abducted were guided to safety zone while the armed terrorists met their waterloos.”

Since they invaded the notorious forest, the Nigerian troops have rescued more than 500 females. In the first daring and precise operation, the troops rescued about 300 women and girls while many terrorists camps including Tokumbere were destroyed.

In another operation, that involved Special Forces, another set of 234 women and children were rescued through the Kawuri and Konduga end of Sambisa forest.

Sustained operations into Sambisa forest being spearheaded by NAF

Military sources told PRNigeria that the sustained operations deep into the Sambisa forest is being spearheaded by the Air Force through what an officer called “tactical aerial bombardments and guided reconnaissance” with the main objective of decimating and clearing the terrorists from the forest which is their last bastion.

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