

Two killed, two missing, varsity shut after Jukun/Tiv clash

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Vice-Chancellor, Federal University, Wukari, Prof. Abubakar Kundiri

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The Benue State Government on Wednesday started the evacuation of its indigenes studying at the Federal University, Wukari in Taraba State after the killing of two students of Tiv extraction by suspected Jukun militias.

The institution's Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Abubakar Kundiri, on Wednesday, approved the immediate closure of the university following alleged abduction and killing of some students and a member of staff of the university in the ongoing Jukun/ Tiv ethnic crisis.

This, it was gathered, led to a protest by the students of the institution on Wednesday.

Consequently, Kundiri through a circular released by the Registrar, Mr Magaji Thomas, directed the immediate closure of the institution.

The statement noted that the closure became imperative following protest by students over the killing.

The circular read, “The Vice-Chancellor of the Federal University of Wukari has approved the suspension of lectures and closure of the institution till further notice.

“This follows the protest by students over the kidnapping of their mates along the Wukari-Katsina Ala Road on Tuesday.

“Students are directed to vacate the hostels and the university premises before 12noon on Wednesday.”

A student of the institution, Mr James Gbaa, told one of our correspondents that two students were killed along the Wukari-Jootar axis on their way to Benue on Tuesday.

“We have contacted the Benue State Government to provide security to escort us out of Taraba and so far, three Armoured Personnel Carriers and Hilux vans with security, have arrived.

“We are waiting for the buses from Benue so that we can leave. We want to thank the Benue State Government for their prompt response,” he said.

Another student, Mr Paul Tersoo, said the whereabouts of a non-academic staff of the university and one other student who were kidnapped on Tuesday was not known. He added that their abductors in Wukari were demanding N25m ransom.

Benue evacuates 812 students after killing

Responding to the incident, the Benue State Government said it had dispatched 15 vehicles to evacuate 812 indigenous students studying at the university.

The state Commissioner for Education, Prof. Dennis Ityavyar, who addressed a news conference in Makurdi on Wednesday, said the evacuation became necessary following the closure of the institution.

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Ityavyar said the state acting Governor, Benson Abounu, had made money available and provided 15 buses to evacuate the students from Taraba and 11 other buses to take them to designated points in the state.

He added that the buses would be accompanied by the troops of the Operation Whirl Stroke.

According to him, the government will also give them money to aid their movement back to their homes from the designated points in Ugbema in Buruku Local Government Area, Gboko and Makurdi.

Ityavyar described the alleged killing of two students of Tiv extraction in the university as a rumour, saying he was only informed that the affected students were missing.

The commissioner said the Caretaker Chairman of the Ukum Local Government Area, Mr Tor-Tyokyaa Ibellogo, had earlier sent six vehicles to Wukari to evacuate the Benue indigenes from the university.

He, however, assured Taraba indigenes studying in Benue State of their safety.

“The Benue State Government has contacted the Taraba State Government, the police commissioner, the army and other security formations in Taraba State to ensure the safety of the Benue State indigenes in Taraba State.

“I’m appealing to Taraba indigenes studying in Benue State to remain calm as their safety is guaranteed.

“This crisis between these two ethnic groups is indeed a sorry situation. It posed a big challenge to the safety and security of lives of students,” Ityavyar said.

The Jukun/Tiv crisis, which started on April 1, 2019 in Kente village in Wukari Local Government Area, has continued to linger and escalate to Donga and Takum as no fewer than eight persons were killed in Takum on Wednesday.

