

Outrage as Benue herders murder 19, bandits vow to kill 17 varsity students

Godwin Isenyo, James Abraham and John Charles 4 May 2021

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Greenfield University main gate

- *Bandits threaten to kill 17 abducted Kaduna undergraduates today after collecting N55m ransom, demand N100m*

Kidnappers of the students of Greenfield University, Kaduna have threatened to kill the remaining students in their custody, if a ransom of N100m is not paid on or before Tuesday (today).

A leader of the bandits, who abducted the students, Sani Jalingo, spoke to the Hausa service of the *Voice of America* on Monday.

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He insisted that a ransom of N100m and 10 motorcycles must be provided for the students to stay alive.

Jalingo issued the threat as herdsmen on Monday killed 19 persons, including children, in fresh attacks on some communities in the Gwer West Local Government Area of Benue State.

The communities attacked included Tse Amgbem, Udam near Aondoana and Agbanu Seghev/Ukuse all in the Gwer West LGA area of the state.

Groups, including the Arewa Consultative Forum, the Middle Belt Forum, the Southern Kaduna Peoples Union and a Tiv group, condemned the killing in Benue State and the threat by bandits to kill students of Greenfield University, Kaduna State.

Recall that 23 students and a member of staff of the privately-owned university, located along the Kaduna-Abuja highway were abducted from

the school on April 20, 2021. Few days later, five of the students were killed by the bandits.

Jalingo, in the interview with the Hausa service of the VOA, demanded a ransom of N100m and ten motorcycles.

He warned that the failure of the Kaduna State Government or the students' families to meet the demands by Tuesday, would lead to the killing of the remaining students.

He insisted that if the money (N100m) and the items (motorcycles) demanded were not provided on Tuesday, trucks would be used to evacuate the lifeless bodies of the remaining students.

He said 17 of the abducted students, including 15 females and two males, were in their custody. Jalingo disclosed that the families of the remaining students had so far paid N55m.

Jalingo said the N55m was used to feed the abductees.

Following the kidnap of the students and a staff member of the school, the bandits had made contacts with the parents and demanded N800m ransom for the release of the students. But five of them were later killed for failure to meet the demand.

Govt watches helplessly as bandits hold sway – M'Belt

The Middle Belt Forum described as sad the threat by the bandits.

The National Publicity Secretary of the MBF, Dr Isuwa Dogo, who spoke to one of our correspondents in Jos on Monday, condemned the development.

He said it was unfortunate that some people had chosen to take the law into their own hands under the guise of banditry while the government whose

responsibility is to protect the citizens from such devilish acts watched helplessly without doing anything.

He stated, "I don't believe that the government and the security agents do not know where the bandits are hiding with the abducted students.

"In this era of information technology, they can easily use the necessary gadgets to track down the criminals who are issuing the threats to kill the kidnapped students but government has not done that for whatever reason.

"So, it is left for them to rescue the kidnapped students or allow the bandits to kill them.

"The choice is left for the government, but I don't think that if the abducted children were to be the President's sons or daughters, or the Senate president's children, they would have allowed them (bandits) to kill the students without doing everything possible to free them from the hands of their captors."

Govt lacks capacity to stop the horror – ACF

The pan-Northern sociopolitical organisation, Arewa Consultative Forum, said whatever the grievances of the bandits, the waste of human lives would not solve the problem.

The National Publicity Secretary of the forum, Emmanuel Yawe, in an interview with The PUNCH, lamented that government lacked the capacity to stop the horror.

He stated, "We in Nigeria are unlucky to be visited by this peculiar kind of wickedness. You captured students, kept them in a remote place and just shoot them one by one before the eyes of traumatised citizens and a government that lacks the capacity to stop the horror? We never knew things would get to this."