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As FG, Yobe confirm abduction: 2 schoolgirls killed in failed rescue operation

— 23rd February 2018

• Some students unaccounted for – Lai Mohammed

From Timothy

Olanrewaju in Dapchi; Ali Abare, Gombe; Fred Itua; Ndubuisi Orji; Aidoghie Paulinus, Abuja

Two of the girls abducted by Boko Haram at the Government Girls Science Technical College (GGSTC) Dapchi, Yobe State, on Monday have been reported dead in a failed rescue operation.

Their bodies were recovered on Wednesday by the Nigerian military.

This is even as the Federal Government yesterday confirmed the abduction, admitting that many of the schoolgirls were yet to be found.

Also yesterday, Governor Ibrahim Gaidam said none of the students in captivity of Boko Haram insurgents were rescued.

According to agency report two of the girls were killed while some others were still missing.

The report said a resident and a local government official said there was jubilation in Dapchi community over the rescue of some of the girls.

"Everybody is celebrating their coming with songs and praises to God Almighty," said Babagana Umar, one of the parents whose daughter had disappeared.

"The only sad news is that two girls were dead without explanation."

Minister of Information, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, who led the Federal Government delegation to Dapchi headquarters of Bursari Local Government, declared that some of the girls were still missing and unaccounted for.

"What we know as at today (Thursday) is that some of the girls are still unaccounted for. That is because some of them are still trickling back to the school," he said without giving details of the number of girls rescued or seen.

He said the responses from the military and Yobe State government was commendable:

"Since this thing happened, I have been in touch with the governor, the theatre commander and the GOC (General Officer Commanding)."

He said Boko Haram was looking for oxygen to breath having been pushed out of Sambisa and other fringes. Mohammed was accompanied by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Hajiya Khadija Abba Ibrahim and a representative of the Minister of Defense. And speaking when he visited community yesterday, Gaidam told family members of the students to keep praying that the girls should be found.

The state government, however, regretted that it issued the statement, claiming some of the girls were rescued based on the "information provided by one of the security agencies involved in the fight against Boko Haram," which it had no reason to doubt.

Another statement issued yesterday by Abdullahi Bego, Director General Press Affairs said:

"The public may recall that we issued a statement last night (Wednesday) in which we announced that some of the girls at Government Girls Science Technical College (GGSTC), Dapchi, who went missing after Boko Haram terrorists had stormed their school last Monday were rescued by officers and men of the Nigerian Army who are currently executing the war against the Boko Haram insurgents.

"We have now established that the information we relied on to make the statement was not credible. The Yobe State Government apologises for that."

A parent whose two daughters are among those missing, Modu Goniri, 45, Personal Assistant to the Commissioner for Works, was categorical that about 94 schoolgirls were still missing.

The governor reportedly pleaded with affected family members and the people

of the community to keep praying to God for the release of their daughters.

Residents of Dapchi said they were unhappy about government announcement on Wednesday night, claiming some of the girls were rescued and in save hands of the military.

Abdul Dapchi, a resident, said Gaidam lost control of the crowd immediately he made the confession.

"We were all angry. How could they have deceived us all along?"

Dapchi, whose two sisters were among the abducted girls, lamented that the community became infuriated at Gaidam after his confession that no girl was actually rescued on Wednesday.

His daughters, Aisha, 18 and Falmata, 17 both SSSII students are among the missing.

"It is not true that some girls were rescued. About 94 of the girls are still missing, including two of my daughters," Modu said.

He denied that the Nigerian military rescued some girls. He equally denied that 48 of the girls turned up the following morning after the Boko Haram attacked the school.

"No one can actually say the whereabouts of the girls, they have disappeared completely without any trace," Modu insisted.

Meanwhile, the three senators from Yobe State, namely, Ahmad Lawan, Bukar Abba Ibrahim and Mohammed Hassan, yesterday, clashed over the abduction of Dapchi schoolgirls on the floor of the Senate.

They clashed when Ibrahim raised a point of order to draw the attention of his colleagues to conflicting reports about the whereabouts of over 100 female students.

Trouble started as soon as the Senate Leader, Lawan, concluded his remarks. He had hailed the efforts of Governor, Mr. Geidam.

"I want to commend Geidam for ensuring that parents were comforted and for sending officials of the Ministry of Education to go round the families and ensure that they took head counts of the girls from that school," Lawan had noted.

Obviously infuriated, Hassan described Lawan's comments as "quite disheartening to hear." He maintained that the governor failed in protecting the students in the state.

He recalled five attacks on public schools in the state in recent times and concluded that the governor had abdicated his duties as the chief security officer of the Boko Haram ravaged state.

Hassan said: "In 2013, a secondary school in Potiskum was attacked, where over 70 children were killed. A year after, another secondary school in Mamudu was attacked where school children were slaughtered. There was another attack in Yadin Buni where students were attacked. The state university too was attacked and now we have this one.

"This is quite disheartening to hear, with due respect to Senator Lawan, to commend the state government for serially failing to protect our students. This is the primary responsibility of the government; to protect the lives and properties of its citizen.

"The state government of Yobe has serially failed in this regard. It has abdicated its primary responsibility in doing that."



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