

Save us from death, UNIMAID residents cry out

**Biyi Adegoroye,
Ahmed Miringa
MAIDUGURI**

Terrified by the scores of Boko Haram attacks in recent times, residents of Maiduguri, the Borno State capital have cried to government to ensure massive deployment of troops to the state because their lives are not safe.

This came as death toll in the Boko Haram ambush of the oil exploration team in the North-East was put at 69 yesterday, even as two University of Maiduguri lecturers and a driver kidnapped by the jihadists made a thrilling video appeal yesterday to Acting President Yemi Osinbajo to negotiate with their captors and ensure their release.

"So far the death toll stands at 69," said an aid agency worker involved in the recovery of bodies after the attack in the Maiduguri area of Borno State on Tuesday. The worker, who asked not to be identified because he was not authorised to speak to the media, said 19 soldiers, 33 civilian militia and 17 civilians were killed.

"The last body was recovered Friday in the bush in the Geidam district in neighbouring Yobe State, which is several kilometres from the scene of the ambush," he told AFP.

"It shows the victim, who had gunshot wounds, died after trekking a long distance. There could be more of such victims in the bush." Another source with knowledge of the rescue operation gave the death toll as "70 or more" and also said it was

unclear whether all the victims had been accounted for.

The attack hit Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation staff. "It's a confirmation of the boldness and reassurance that Boko Haram has managed to gain over the last six weeks," said Yan St-Pierre, from the Modern Security Consulting Group.

The four minutes 30 seconds grainy footage featured the three staff of UniMaid sitting in a room whose walls were covered with purple clothing designed with roses as they called on the government to negotiate their release.

The three abductees took turns to personally introduce themselves as Yusuf Ibrahim, a lecturer, Geology Department, University of Maiduguri; Haruna, a driver and Dr. Solomon a lecturer in the same university.

Solomon who sat in the middle spoke briefly in Hausa before switching to English. He confirmed that they were abducted on July 25 by Boko Haram fighters whom he carefully referred to as "soldiers of Khalifa Al-Barnawi", when they were carrying out geological survey services for the NNPC on behalf of the University of Maiduguri.

"I want to advise that the use of excessive force is not the solution. We want to call on the federal government to meet this demand and, as promised, they will release us immediately," said one of the men, who identified himself as a lecturer at the university.

"I want to call the Acting President, Yemi Osinbajo, to come to our rescue to meet



L-R: Chief of Army Staff, Lt.-Gen. Tukur Buratai; former Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Martin Luther Agwai (rtd); his wife, Mrs. Ruth Agwai; and Emir of Birnin Gwari II, Alhaji Jibrin Zubairu Maigwari II, during the formal renaming of the Nigerian Army Peacekeeping Centre as Martin Luther Agwai International Leadership Peacekeeping Centre in Jaji, Kaduna... yesterday.

PHOTO: NAN

the demands of soldiers of caliph under the leadership of Abu Musab al-Barnawi," he said in the four-and-a-half minute video.

The University of Maiduguri confirmed the three men in the video were their staff members and also released their photo late on Friday. The university had said a total of nine staff were involved, four lecturers, three technicians and two drivers. It confirmed the receipt of five corpses of staff: two lecturers, two technicians and a driver on Friday.

Military sources said yesterday that there were indications that the service chiefs may have resumed in Maiduguri today (Sunday) as ordered by Acting President Yemi Osinbajo.

Top among those sending save our soul call and clamouring for improved security in Maiduguri is the Joint Unions of the University, whose institution has suffered eight attacks in the past four months. It call on the Federal Government to save the lives of the over 40,000 staff and students on the school campus.

"We call on the Federal Government to, as a matter of urgency, effectively curtail the security challenges by fortifying the university, including procurement of modern security gadgets, fortification and fencing of the parameter fence of the university will cost about N2, 869, 810,429.96."

The unions consist of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU), Non Academic Staff Union (NASU), National Association of Academic Technologies (NAAT) and the Student Union Government (SUG) led by the ASUU chairman, Dr. Dani Mamman.

Dr. Mamman warned that "if no immediate action is taken to protect our lives and property, we shall be compelled to call our congresses to consider taking drastic action, which will not argue well to our students and their parents. We wish to categorically state that we will not guarantee the re-opening of University of Maiduguri for the 2017/2018 academic session in October, if the federal government fails to meet our reasonable demands."

Vice Chancellor of the university, Professor Ibrahim Njodi said in spite of the persistent attacks by the suicide bombers the university has refused to close down because they don't want to succumb to the Boko Haram insurgents.

"We refuse to close the university because we don't want to succumb to the in-

surgers; we first thought of closing the University in 2010 but due to the fact that most of the students are from the North-East where most of them are already displaced and took the university as their place of abode, that was why NEMA considers the campus, as 23rd camp in the state", the VC said.

Njodi, appealed to them to be patient as security will be tightened in and around the university, urging them to report any suspicious objects or movement to the nearest security outfit.

Speaking during an interview, a student of the institution, Mohammed Musa said no amount of Boko Haram attack will deter them from pursuing their academic activities, and appealed to the university authority to beef up security on campus, as the university is a large community that cannot be easily manned.

A Maiduguri resident, Bulama Modu, though expressed worries over the spate of attacks said there is no need of declaring state of emergency in the North-East, as in the past. Stating that previous emergency rule in the state did not stop the Boko Haram insurgents.

He said: "It makes no difference with or without State of Emergency, as it has been declared in the past with no result. The best thing is for the government to equip and relocate the entire service chief to Maiduguri, so that they will once and for all deal with insurgency. That is when total peace will be restored in the North-East and country at large."

Another resident Alhaji Ibrahim Abubakar, said the military made serious successes during the time of the former Theater Commander, Major General Lucky Irabor, but with the deployment and redeployment within the theater, things have changed and now the Boko Haram insurgents have set up their attacks. He called on

military authorities to review at their counter-terrorists strategy.

He also blamed the recent incessant Boko Haram attacks on the recent swap deal between the Federal Government and the insurgents which led to the release of Chibok schoolgirls and Boko Haram commanders. The released commanders must have acquired more arms and logistics to carry out current attacks.

Meanwhile, security expert and former Director of State Security Services, Chief Mike Ejiofor, has warned that re-locating service chiefs to the theater of war as ordered by the Acting President is very dangerous. "I don't see what difference that will make, because it means the nation is sending its top chiefs into the battle front. If anything terrible happens to them, it will dampen the moral of the troops. Service chiefs don't need to go to theater of war to achieve results. War of this nature is fought through counter-terrorism, intelligence and war strategies," he said.

Making reference to the 2015 incidence, he said: "If you remember President Muhammadu Buhari's first broadcast, he said service chiefs should relocate to the theater of war, but did it change anything?"

He warned against celebrating the terrorists, stating that, terrorism is a warfare that will not end easily. "Many countries have been fighting terrorism for about three decades. Northern Ireland fought it for over 26 years. Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran are fighting it. So I don't know why we continue to celebrate the attacks, because the more we do, the more they become daring. We need to review our counter-terrorism strategy because these people have not been decimated as previously claimed by government officials," he said.

Group seeks sack of Niger Delta Minister

**Onwuka Nzeshi
ABUJA**

A civil society group, Niger Delta Association for Peace and Unity (NDAPU), has petitioned the Acting President, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, demanding the sack of the Minister of Niger Delta Affairs, Pastor Uguru Usani.

In an open letter dated July 25, 2017, and addressed to the Acting President, the group accused Usani of mismanaging his ministerial portfolio and indulging in actions capable of frustrating the smooth running of government business.

"With all due respect, this minister has displayed gross incapacity to work with others. It is on record that since he was appointed as Minister of Niger Delta barely two years ago, the ministry has witnessed an unprecedented turnover at the top echelon of its personnel. At least three Permanent Secretaries who were appointed to work

with him left in quick succession, due largely to his high-handedness.

"It is either he does not know the job of a minister or he has deliberately been working towards an agenda of making himself a Sole Administrator," the group said.

The petition, which was jointly signed by Comrade Godswill Pakribo (Chsirman) and Jonas Opubo (Secretary), also accused Uguru of attempting to micro-manage the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the only parastatal under the purview of the ministry.

According to the group, Uguru has become a thorn in the flesh of the new management of the NDDC, as he had been issuing queries randomly to officials of the agency.

"We believe that the NDDC is an agency under the Presidency, whose day to day running rests with the Managing Director and the Executive Direc-

tors. It is also a fact that the management is answerable to the board of the NDDC, which is also appointed by the President. It is however, baffling that the current minister does not seem to realise these facts in order to respect the boundaries.

"We dare say that the dream of President Muhammadu Buhari for the Niger Delta may be frustrated if this trend is allowed to continue. We wish to state that there are so many capable hands in Cross River State and indeed the Niger Delta and we cannot allow one man to hold the oil rich region to ransom," the petitioners wrote.

Saturday Telegraph made efforts to seek the views of the Minister on the petition but met a brickwall as calls put across to his mobile phone were not picked. Attempts to also reach the Director of Press, Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, Marshal Gundu, for comments on the allegations, did not yield the desired results.