

Tiv-Jukun crisis: Wukari varsity shut as Benue evacuates students



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By



Federal University of Wukari, Taraba State, was shut yesterday following the alleged abduction and killing of some students and staff of the institution in the ongoing Jukun-Tiv ethnic crisis.

The crisis has also forced the Benue State government to evacuate its 812 students trapped in the institution.

The university's Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Abubakar Kundiri, yesterday approved the suspension of academic activities and closure of the institution.

This is contained in a statement issued in Wukari by the Registrar, Mr. Magaji Gangumi, which was made available to journalists.

Gangumi said the suspension became imperative following protest by students over the incident.

He said: "The Vice-Chancellor, Federal University, 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 Wukari -Katsina Ala highway on Tuesday.

"Students are directed to vacate the hostel and university premises by or before noon."

The latest round of the Jukun-Tiv crisis, which started since April 1, 2019 in Kente village, lingered on till the Tuesday incident in which three students were reportedly abducted and murdered.

But the VC, Kundiri, told our correspondent on the phone that adequate security measures had been put in place to ensure the safety of "both staff and students as they leave Wukar".

He said apart from school buses, the Chairman of Ukum Local Government in neighbouring Benue State was sending about 10 buses to evacuate students from that state.

Kundiri added that security had also been reinforced from both the Army and the police to ensure that members of academic community conveniently left Wukari without any hitch.

Meanwhile, the Commissioner for Education, Benue State, Prof. Dennis Ityavyar, told journalists in Makurdi that government evacuated about 812 students of Benue origin who were trapped in the Jukun-Tiv crisis that spilled over to the university in Taraba State.

Ityavyar, who gave an update on the students' unrest which led to the closure of the university, said the gesture became imperative to safeguard the lives of the students studying in that state.

The closure of the institution followed students' restiveness in the aftermath of protest staged by Tiv Students Union after Jukun militants allegedly kidnapped two of their mates and a university's official, also of Benue extraction, and killed them.

The commissioner said government had provided four Marcopollo buses, 60-seater each, and 10 of 15 and 16-seater buses to help evacuate the students to different locations to meet their parents.

He said the buses were accompanied by a detachment of troops of the Operation Whirl-Stroke of the Nigerian Army to provide security going to Wukari and back to Benue State.

Ityavyar said the Ukum Local Government Chairman, Mr. Tor-Tyokyaa Ibellogo, also provided six additional buses to assist security in the evacuation of the trapped students.

He added: "We inquired to know how many students were involved, and we were told that 812 Benue State students were involved.

"The 812 students were all assembled in one place waiting for the arrival of the evacuation team. We sent about 15 buses and out of this, there were four Marcopollo buses that will take about 60 people each and 10 of the 15 and 16-seater buses. We have a detachment of members of the Operation Whirl-Stroke who will provide security going to Wukari and back to Benue."

It was learnt that the students and the university official were killed on Wukari-Jootar Road close to the institution.

They were on their way to Jootar to get items they needed to use in school when people suspected to be Jukun militia ambushed and killed them.

In a statement, the President, National Union of Benue State Students (NUBESS), Comrade Tynor Smith, identified those killed as Tsav Mark, Vihior Sughter of Microbiology Department and a non-academic staff member of the institution.