

THURSDAY 22 MARCH



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## Dapchi girls: 5 of our students died on day of attack – Fasima, released girl

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By Henry Umoru, Ben Agande, Joseph Erunke, Ndahi Marama, Omeiza Ajayi, Johnbosco Agbakwuru, Dirisu Yakubu & Rotimi Ojomoyela





**ABUJA**—One of the students of Government Girls Technical Science College, Dapchi, Yobe State, identified as Fasima, said yesterday that some of their colleagues died of exhaustion on the day of the attack by Boko Haram, following the manner they were crammed into the vehicles that took them away.



There was wild jubilation in Dapchi, yesterday, as 104 of the 110 schoolgirls abducted by the terrorist group were released by the insurgents and returned home safely.

The insurgents, believed to be the Mamman Nur-led faction, transported the girls back to Dapchi in the early hours of yesterday in about nine vehicles.



Unfortunately, one of the abducted school girls, names withheld, was not freed as the insurgents insisted they took her back to their hideouts because she refused to denounce her faith (Christianity) and be converted to Islam.

The girls' release coincided with a solidarity visit of parents of the abducted Chibok girls who were in Dapchi yesterday.

A security source said: "Boko Haram militants drove into Dapchi and dropped off the girls in the heart of the town and went back with no shot fired at them. We were asked to leave our camp which is the same route that Boko Haram followed to drop off the girls."

Residents said before taking them out of Dapchi to Abuja, via Maiduguri, the girls received medical treatment at the General Hospital in Dapchi.

"The girls are looking terrible. Most of them are on drip because they were very exhausted and underfed," a medical personnel at the hospital said.

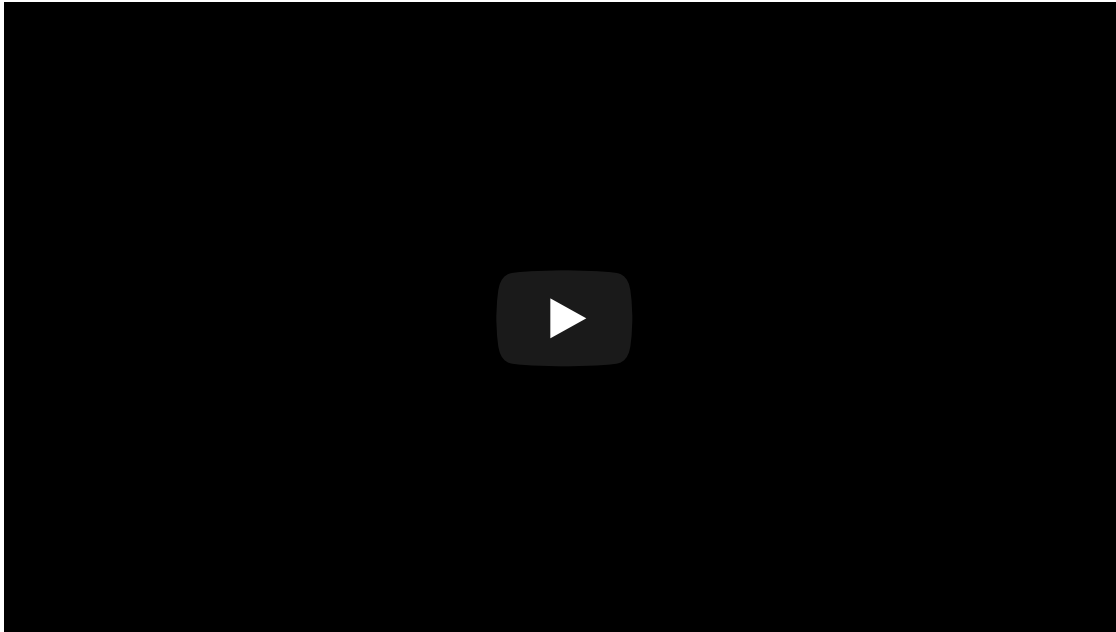
Speaking on the number of girls released, another security source said some of the parents took their children away immediately Boko Haram dropped them.

"We are having challenges getting the exact number of girls released because some of the parents came and took their children away immediately Boko Haram came and dropped them off. We are trying to retrieve some of the girls now but it is difficult," he stated.

But one of the released girls, who gave her name simply as Fasima, confirmed that two of her colleagues, Aisha and Maimuna, were among those who died as a result of suffocation in one of the vehicles conveying them to the insurgents' hideouts on the day of the abduction.



“They (insurgents) brought us this morning safely, when they abducted us, they took us to one of their underground hideouts, we only heard sounds of jets/aeroplanes, but we couldn’t see. We were not starved one day, the insurgents allowed us to cook any food of our choice.



“Unfortunately, five of us could not make it as they were confirmed dead on arrival at their hideouts due to suffocation in the vehicle that conveyed their batch.

“We are now set to go to Dapchi General Hospital for medical check up please,” Fasima hurriedly said and cut off the interview with **Vanguard**.

**Vanguard** reliably gathered that Governor Ibrahim Gaidam of Yobe is not in the country, as he is reported to be at Lincoln University College of Malaysia, Petaling Jaya, near Kuala Lumpur, to receive a Gold Merit Award conferred on him for working hard to improve education and security in Yobe State, despite the ongoing six-year old Boko Haram insurgency in the state.

The release of the schoolgirls was initially confirmed by Abdullahi Kawi, father of Aisha Abdullahi of JSS 2 and Mustapha Mohammed Dapchi, Vice Chairman, Youth

Assembly of Nigeria (YAN), Yobe State chapter, whose house is located around the school.

He said his friend called him to confirm that one of the girls was dropped off at Gumsa yesterday night, “while the others who were on their way to Dapchi arrived this morning” (yesterday).

However, Mustapha Dapchi, said: “I saw them dropped at the town’s motor park, near the Main Market and the insurgents who brought them in a convoy of about nine vehicles told them to go back to their respective houses.”

Another resident, Mallam Usman Ali, who lives near the motor park, where the schoolgirls were dropped, said: “The insurgents were very friendly as they told residents that they have to return back the girls and reunite with their parents, having realized that 99% of the schoolgirls are Muslims and most of them were fasting on the day of the attack.

“One of the insurgents said they thought majority of the girls are infidels, hence the attack, but regretted their actions, and have no option than to return them back to their destinations without collecting a dime from any government.

“Only one of the girls who refused to be converted to Islam, will not be freed as they will go back with her,” Ali quoted one of the insurgents who addressed some of the residents.

Human right activist, Mrs Aisha Wakil, expressed joy over the release of the school girls from Boko Haram captivity.

Wakil, popularly called “Mama Boko Haram”, who appeared highly elated, said she received the news of the release of the girls with “great joy.”



She commended the Federal Government and other parties who contributed to the development, and expressed the hope that the remaining girls, including Chibok girls, would also be released soon.

“I am highly elated over the release of the girls, it is a welcome development,” she said.

Wakil had earlier indicated interest to work towards the release of the abducted girls.

Also, Malam Bashir Manzo, the Chairman, Parents Association of the Dapchi Abducted Girls, said they were happy over the development.

At press time, Manzo disclosed that they were currently taking head count of the girls, adding that most of them had returned to their homes.

Representatives of the Chibok Parents Association had, yesterday morning, paid a solidarity visit to Dapchi to rejoice with the affected families.

Similarly, Mr Maina Musa and Ayuba Alamson, parents of abducted Chibok school girls, who coincidentally were in Dapchi, expressed joy over the development.

They, however, tasked the government to secure the release of the remaining school girls in captivity.

“It is disheartening on our part to see that our remaining children are still languishing in the hands of Boko Haram insurgents in the past four years,” Alamson said.

Alamson noted that over 100 Chibok girls were in Boko Haram captivity since 2014.



He called on the international community to support the Federal Government to secure release of the girls and others still in captivity.

### **Buhari dispatches 3 ministers to Dapchi**

As it is, Ministers dispatched yesterday by President Buhari were the Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed; Khadijat Bukar Abba (Foreign Affairs, State) and Abdulrahman Dambazzau, Interior.

According to the Information Minister, Mohammed, 104 of the 110 schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram on February 19 in Dapchi, Yobe State were released unconditionally in the early hours of yesterday.

Fielding questions from journalists, Mohammed said contrary to initial information that 105 of the girls were released, it was actually 104 girls and a boy that were released by the insurgents.

Mohammed said the girls were released by Boko Haram without any condition attached to it, pointing out that the release did not cost the government anything.

However, sources revealed that there is no way the abductors will bring back the girls safely without collecting ransom from the Federal Government as been done in the past, citing the recent release of some Chibok schoolgirls, police women, oil exploration workers and University of Maiduguri staff.

### **FEC members excited**

Meanwhile, members of the Federal Executive Council, FEC, were excited before commencement of the weekly meeting at the Council Chamber, Presidential Villa, Abuja, yesterday, following the release of the girls.

President Muhammadu Buhari, who presided over the FEC, directed three ministers to go to Dapchi to assess the true situation of events and come with



updates on the development.

Cabinet members who gathered ahead of the FEC, were seen clustering in small groups, discussing news of release of the girls.

The release of the students came on the heels of the allegation by Amnesty International that the federal government-controlled security agencies got advanced warning but failed to prevent the abduction of schoolgirls.

While fielding questions from journalists, Mohammed said the directive by President Buhari to all security agencies to do everything possible to secure the release of the girls had yielded fruits, with the confirmed release of the abducted students.

He said the number of the freed girls would be updated after the remaining ones had been documented, especially because the girls were not handed over to anyone but dropped off in Dapchi.

He said: "The girls were released unconditionally, no money changed hands. The only had one condition, that they will return them to where they picked them. So in the early hours of today (yesterday), they did return the girls and most of them went to their homes.

"As of now, I can confirm that 91 girls and one boy have been released. The event is developing. Many of the girls that were released were not dropped in one place. Some were dropped on the road and they went back naturally to their parents' houses. They are now being asked to come and be documented at a center and as at five minutes ago, I was told 91 girls and a boy had been documented."

When asked how came a boy among the released girls as the school they were abducted was a female school, the Minister said, "I can tell you that is authentic."



Whether they pick the boy or not I can't hazard any guess but don't forget even in a girl school, which is a boarding school there will be parents, there are teachers who can have children among them. But what I have been told is that 91 girls and one boy have been documented."

The minister later issued a statement, saying the number of girls released had increased to 104, another girl and a boy.

On who dropped them and how they dropped, he responded: "The report we got was that one condition the insurgents gave was that they will be the ones to drop the girls and they dropped them in the early hours of this morning."

Also asked how the release of the girls was secured with ease, Mohammed said: "Like I said in the statement released to you early, once violence and confrontation were ruled out and negotiation started, there was a deliberate pause on the part of the military.

"In order words, it was agreed that there will be no force, there will be no confrontation, that was why it was possible for them to drop the girls. It was part of the agreement that we will release the girls there will be no violence nor confrontation. And don't forget that the lives of this children are much more important to us than any cheap victory."

Responding to the question on what government was doing to prevent a repeat of the ugly incident, he said: "If you remember, immediately this thing happened, Mr. President actually directed the security agencies, especially the Nigeria Civil Defence Corps, to man every school.

"But you see, we must look at this thing in context, if you look at other countries like the US, in Florida you saw how gunman entered the school and killed about 17 pupils. Insurgency all over the world is a global issue and the government must always be on its toes.

“One of the things we have done today is that we have tried to secure the schools and there is even efforts on parts of government to even merge some schools, schools that are far flung.” On the rehabilitation plans for the girls, he said: “As I speak to you now, they are in General Hospital in Dapchi and the counselors are there with them. Just as we did when we had the first set and second set of release of the Chibok girls, they will be quarantined and psychologically be counseled before they go back to their schools.”

Also responding to the question to the effect that one of the parents said his daughter was not released because she refused to denounce her faith, the Minister said: “You see, all we can tell is what is got from our sources on ground. As these things develop, we will let you know.”

### **No roll call of dead girls yet**

Also speaking to journalists, a member of the federal government delegation to Yobe State and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Khadijat Bukar Abba, said there was no roll call of the dead ones, contrary to the report that five of the abducted girls were dead.

She said: “I am very excited today. My name is Khadijah Bukar Abba Ibrahim, the minister representing Yobe State. I am exhilarated, I am happy, you just describe anything today, that is what I feel because the Dapchi girls have been released.

“We are very very happy. We have achieved what we had gone out to achieve and we thank the Almighty God for His mercies.”

On the news that some of the girls were dead, she said: “As far as I know, now they are taking a role call, so we cannot ascertain how many have passed on or whatever. We will find out much later on what the casualties are.”



On her advice to parents regarding the girls going back to school, the minister said: “I will advise them to continue sending their children to school. We, as a government, will just fortify the schools in order to make them safe for children to actually go and learn.”

Also speaking, the Minister of Defence, Mansur Dan-Ali, who predicted that the girls would be released a week ago, said: “Basically, I want to speak on the impression that people had that we cannot get the girls released. If you can remember the last interview I had with Channels Television, I said in two weeks, two months or less we are going to get the girls released and this has happened.

“So, this is as result of the efforts of Mr. President and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces for the support he has been giving us and the output is showing now.”

On the negotiations that went in before the release, Dan-Ali said: “I did say even if you are going for negotiations, if you are not doing so from the point of strength then you cannot make it.”

### **DSS led negotiations for the release of Dapchi schoolgirls—DHQ**

THE Defence Headquarters, yesterday, distanced itself from negotiations that saw the release of abducted students of Government Girls’ Science and Technical College, Dapchi.

But it claimed that the Department of State Services, DSS, led the negotiations that resulted in the release of the students.

Acting Director, Defence Information, Brigadier General John Agim, said this, following inquiry.



Responding to a text message sent to his known telephone line, the military spokesman simply said: "The girls were released through negotiations led by the Department of State Services, DSS."

He, however, could not say anything further.

### **Our prayers have been answered, says Saraki**

Reacting to the release of the girls, Senate President, Dr. Bukola Saraki, described it as the answered prayers of millions of Nigerians, and urged the government not to rest on its oars until the remaining girls were released to their parents.

In a statement signed by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Yusuph Olaniyonu, Saraki commended President Buhari, the Nigerian security forces and the government of Yobe State for the ongoing efforts that led to the release of the girls, stating that the government should do all within its power to ensure the return of the remaining Dapchi and Chibok girls.

Saraki said: "The release of the abducted Dapchi schoolgirls is tremendous news for the country. Our prayers have been answered."

### **Fayose accuses FG of conspiracy**

On his part, Governor Ayodele Fayose of Ekiti State described the abduction and subsequent release of the Dapchi girls as an indictment on the federal government.

According to him, it is a drama scripted by the government and its agents to swindle Nigerians.

Fayose said in a statement signed by his Special Assistant on Public Communications and New Media, Lere Olayinka: "This appears like an arranged



abduction and an arranged release, but we thank God that the innocent girls have returned home and we condole with parents of those that died.

“Curiously, the same spirit who made sure that all military checkpoints in Dapchi and other surrounding towns were removed to pave way for abduction of the girls also made sure that the girls were returned without any security agent seeing them.”

### **BBOG to interrogate return of school girls**

The Bring Back Our Girls, BBOG, movement has expressed pleasure at the return of the abducted Dapchi school girls but said it would interrogate the circumstances surrounding the entire incident.

The BBOG in a statement by its spokesman, Sesugh Akume said; “The #BringBackOurGirls movement has been made aware of the cheering news of the return of our missing #DapchiGirls. Our movement has confirmed this to be true and the accurate position of things.

“Reports say that five of them may have passed on, and one is still held back. This we are not yet able to fully verify.

“Our immense pleasure at the return of most of our #DapchiGirls on this 30th day of their captivity notwithstanding, the 14 questions we posed to the Government of Nigeria still stand, as well as our notice to commence legal action.

“The circumstances of this return shall also be interrogated. We shall be communicating further as we gain more clarity on what transpired and what is going on.”

**Dapchi girls' kidnap/release, stage-managed — PDP**



In its reaction, Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, condemned the All Progressives Congress, APC, and certain officials in the Presidency for allegedly staging the abduction of the schoolgirls for political purposes.

In a press briefing by the party spokesman, Kola Ologbondiyan yesterday, the party described the ordeal suffered by the abducted girls as callous, saying same was perpetrated with the 2019 polls in mind.

“Our party considers this act as wicked, callous and tormenting to use innocent schoolgirls as pawns in an ignoble script that was designed to hoodwink Nigerians and orchestrate a great rescue and security prowess of a conquering General, all to push a 2019 re-election bid, is an unpardonable gamble with human lives,” the party said.

### **JNI hails release of Dapchi school girls**

The *Jama'atu Nasril Islam*, JNI, yesterday, applauded the release of the abducted Dapchi school girls, saying the Federal Government was living up to its constitutional responsibilities.

The JNI Secretary General, Dr Khalid Abubakar said in an interview with the *News Agency of Nigeria* (NAN) in Kaduna that the news of the release of the girls was reassuring and commendable.

“The JNI applauds the Federal Government, parents, all security agencies, and other stakeholders for this good news,” he said.

He tasked the government to also intensify efforts for the release of the remaining Chibok school girls “and all those whose cries were not heard but are in the hands of the insurgents.”

### **ACF hails release of Dapchi girls**



Similarly, Arewa Consultative Forum, hailed the release of the girls by Boko Haram.

In a statement issued in Kaduna yesterday, the Forum also called on the federal government to intensify efforts to release the Chibok girls abducted by the terrorist sect almost four years ago.

The statement, signed by Ibrahim Biu, Publicity Secretary, also called on the federal government to do everything possible to ensure that such incident never happened again.

“The good news from the Federal Government that the kidnapped female students of Government Girls Science Technical College, Dapchi in Yobe State that were abducted early this year by some Boko Haram terrorists have been release by their abductors is a welcome and reassuring development.

“ACF, therefore, commends the Federal Government for its commitment and determination to the rescue and release of the Dapchi girls. The release of the Dapchi girls has certainly gladdened the hearts of the affected parents, relations, the Yobe State government and other Nigerians. ACF, therefore, urges the Federal Government to immediately provide necessary medical facilities and other psychological therapy for the traumatized girls and also unite them with their parents,” the group stated.

### **We've done what Jonathan, PDP couldn't do – APC**

Also reacting to the release of the girls, ruling All Progressives Congress, APC, gave itself a pass mark, lashing out at the immediate past administration of President Goodluck Jonathan for allegedly idling away for several weeks when it was confronted with a similar scenario, the 2014 abduction of scores of school girls in Chibok.



National Publicity Secretary, Mallam Bolaji Abdullahi, said in a statement yesterday: “The APC is extremely delighted with the news of the return of the schoolgirls abducted from Government Girls Science Technical College, Dapchi, Yobe State by Boko Haram.

“The prompt release of the Dapchi schoolgirls is another solid demonstration of the political will of the President Muhammadu Buhari-led APC administration to secure the lives of all Nigerians.

“With this prompt release of the Dapchi girls, the APC government has demonstrated how government should respond to such situations. If the immediate-past Peoples Democratic Party PDP administration had responded with similar alacrity, the Chibok schoolgirls would have been released or rescued.

“Instead, the PDP wasted several weeks wallowing in denial and conspiracy theories such that it was now left for the APC government to rescue many of the girls and rehabilitate them.

“We assure Nigerians that the current administration remains committed to securing the release of the remaining Chibok schoolgirl still held in captivity by Boko Haram and ultimately rehabilitate and reunite them with their families and loved ones.

“The Party is confident that reforms that the government has embarked on would improve the capacity and efficiency of our security agencies to prevent the kidnap of children by terrorists and diminish their ability to carry out attacks on soft targets.”

**I'm happy my daughter didn't denounce Christ —Sharibu**

Nata Sharibu, father of the only student who is yet to be freed, says Boko Haram insurgents decided not to release his daughter because she refused to denounce



Christ.

Speaking on RayPower FM shortly after the students were released, the girl's father said he learned that the insurgents gave his daughter the option of converting to Islam but she rejected it.

He expressed delight over her stance but prayed for her return.

"All of them were released. They said some were dead there and my daughter is alive but they cannot release her because she is a Christian," he said.

"They gave her the option of converting in order to be released but she said she will never become a Muslim... I am very sad but I am also jubilating too because my daughter did not denounce Christ."



Dapchi Update:  
You've failed, PDP  
tells Buhari's FG

March 3, 2018



Dapchi attack evokes  
memories of  
'conspiracy theories'  
over Chibok' — Gov  
Shettima

February 26, 2018



Dapchi Update:  
We've extended  
search to  
neighbouring  
countries — FG

March 3, 2018

