

How kidnappers killed 5, abducted 25

ON SEPTEMBER 7, 2019 9:48 AMIN **NEWSBY NWAFOR**



...Eyewitness and victim, Dr Biri narrates experience
...Driver, woman, 2 men in SUV killed
...Abductors call victims' families, demand ransom

By Emma Amaize, Regional Editor, Niger Delta

IT was a nightmare for travelers going to Abuja, last weekend, as over 30-suspected kidnappers and armed robbers laid siege to the Auchi-Lokoja-Abuja highway, killing five persons, including the driver of a popular transport company based in the Southeast and abducting 25 persons, between Abaji and Lokoja in Kogi State.





•Dr Emmanuel Biri, an eyewitness and victim

They shot dead the driver on the spot, as well as woman and two men in a Sports Utility Vehicle, SUV.

The kidnappers later called some members of the families of the abducted victims demanding for N40 million ransom and above.

The criminals, who operated for nearly 40 minutes ransacked all the trapped vehicles riddled with bullets and stained with blood.

Saturday Vanguard gathered that the rampaging gangsters killed two passengers in one of the trapped Sienna vehicles and kidnapped three.

The heartless criminals seized all the 14 passengers in the bus of the driver shot dead and kidnapped two occupants of the SUV after it somersaulted.

Many others sustained injuries while the damaged vehicles were later towed away.

One shot dead as rival cult groups clash in Nsukka(Opens in a new browser tab)

Reports said that soldiers, led by a corporal, police officers and men of the Nigeria Civil Defence came to the rescue of some of the victims, who fled into the forest while escaping from the marauders.

According to one of the victims, a don at the Delta State University, DELSU, Abraka, Prof Emmanuel Biri, who escaped death by a hair's breath, "They (responders) also helped putting the injured victims in vehicles and ambulance."

His words: "About 20 percent of the bullets expended by the kidnappers were recovered inside the vehicles. Out of the seven passengers in the vehicle I boarded, two (a male and female) were kidnapped and two sustained serious gunshot injuries. The kidnappers are already demanding N40 million ransom from the family of the female hostage."

He said he was on his way to Abuja when they ran into the ambush by over 30-suspected kidnappers. He said: "Those who carried out the operation along the road were not less than 30. They were all fully armed with AK-47 assault rifles and they shot directly at the vehicles with direct intent to kill."

"On Sunday 31st of August, we were brutally attacked between Abaji and Lokoja on our way to Abuja. Our Sienna vehicle ran into the scene where over 30 armed men were firing directly on the different vehicles plying the lane to Abuja."

"The vehicle I boarded was just less than 100 metres away from the bandits when we saw them firing at us and the Sienna vehicle directly ahead of us. I saw over 15 to 20 men who were shooting directly at the Sienna vehicle immediately ahead of us and shooting directly at our bus from the front and side right hand side.

"The bandits lined the side of the road for about 100 metres in a military formation pattern. Then the driver of a bus stopped and engaged reverse gear. When our driver engaged the reverse gear, they started firing from the rear of the vehicle. They also shot from right hand side of the vehicle.

"At least four bullets directly hit the front passenger door glass where I sat. Luckily, they hit and bust the bottle water I kept at the door cup holder. Then suddenly from behind the bandits started raining bullets on the different vehicles that were reversing, then we realised we had fallen into an ambush. They fired several shots directly at us.

"At a point, the vehicle could not move again. I guess that was when they had shot the front tire and that perforated the fuel tank. More than 15 of them fired at us from the rear and the side. When the vehicle could not move any longer, the driver asked us to de-board and run. The passengers thereafter ran off the vehicle. We could hear someone shouting – get him or her alive or dead.

“I personally followed the side of the driver of the vehicle and we ran different directions. As we were running they were raining bullets at us. We could hear the sound of gunshots in the rapid pattern. We just keep praying, running, and running into the forest. A co-female passenger later joined me in the forest. We ran for about 200 hundred metres and we came to a very thick section of the forest.

“At that point we started to crawl; we they came to a valley of over 50 metres deep and about 200 metres wide. We became confused but the gunshots were close to us in about 100 metres away. I looked into the valley from the undergrowth and discovered that there was no water in it and at that point I crawled into it.

“We stayed inside for a while but decided that it was not safe to stay inside the valley as the gunshots were getting closer. We had to climb out. Thank God, the valley was not too steep; nonetheless climbing out of it was not easy. We walked about 200 metres away from the main road then we started walking back inside the forest towards Lokoja.

“We walked thereafter over one and half kilometers and we started to hear the sound of horn and sirens of vehicles. Therefore, we walked back to road where some they rescued us. We trekked in the forest for about two hours while the bandits operated for over 40 minutes,” he said.

The kidnappers later abandoned a nursing mother, who they shot and were taking into the forest when the leader, who observed she was dying, directed his men to leave her.

Gunmen snatch N9.5m from Chief Accountant in Niger(Opens in a new browser tab)

Security agents rescued her after she managed to escape to the road. She revealed that she saw more than 50 bandits inside the forest.

“She told me that she saw about other 50 other armed members of the bandits in the forest. She was later taken to hospital in Abuja with other injured persons where they are currently receiving treatment,” Biri said.

An Airforce officer, who survived the attack, said he fell into a dish and covered by grasses, so the bandits could not see him, but he heard them towards the end of attack talking in Fulfude that they should leave.