

Katsina abduction: 2 students killed by kidnappers — Escapee

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A grieving mother yesterday said one of the abducted students of Government Senior Secondary School, GSSS, Kankara who escaped from the kidnappers has disclosed that two of his colleagues had been killed, and that the abductors feed them with leaves and beat them like cattle.

She also said the student told them that students still missing were over 500, adding that whoever said the number of missing children is 10, is a liar.

The woman, Hajia Faiza Kankara, who spoke to Vanguard said the escaped student stated this while giving an account of his ordeal in the hands of the captors.

Her words: "My son, Usman Tahir is in SS2 class. He is still missing. One of the students who returned Sunday night said they were 520; that includes two that were killed and himself, who escaped."

This is as Katsina State Governor, Aminu Bello Masari yesterday, briefed President Muhammadu Buhari on progress being made to rescue the schoolboys kidnapped from Government Science Secondary School, Kankara, in the state.

A statement by Senior Special Assistant to the President on Media and Publicity, Mallam Garba Shehu, said the governor disclosed that the kidnappers had made contact, when he visited the President at his Daura country home.

This came as Northern elders, again expressed concern over the worsening security situation in the region, saying Friday's attack on GSSS, Kankara, had further confirmed their position that the region is now at the mercy of terrorists, bandits and other criminal elements.

The elders, under the aegis of Coalition of Northern Elders for Peace and Development, noted that the continuous stay in office of the service chiefs, whom they noted, have been exhausted with nothing more to offer in security service, was emboldening the adversaries in their increasing dastardly actions against the country.

Meanwhile, Middle Belt Movement for Justice and Peace, MBMJP, has decried the abduction of the students, as a wake-up call on the Federal Government to immediately rejig Nigeria's security apparatus.

This came as a religious organisation, the Jama'atu Nasril Islam, JNI, said that there are insinuations that for pecuniary benefits, some top echelon among the security operatives don't want the state of insecurity in the country to end.

In another development, thugs wielding dangerous weapons invaded the Arewa House, Kaduna, yesterday, where they ran after officials of the Coalition of Northern Groups, CNG, who were there for a security summit.

Shehu in the statement, said "We are making progress and the outlook is positive," the governor told newsmen after an hour meeting with the President, which started at 2p.m.

The governor, who according to the statement was accompanied by the Deputy Governor of the state, Manir Yakubu, said: "The kidnappers had made contact and discussions are already on pertaining to safety and return to their homes."

Masari also noted that security agencies had located the position of the children, adding that the President is fully committed to the rescue of the school children, as it was only appropriate to visit the President and give him more details of rescue efforts.

2 students killed by abductors— Escapee

Recounting what the escaped student narrated, Hajia Faiza Kankara said the boy told them that the bandits feed them with leaves and beat them like cattle.

She also said the student told them that students still missing were over 500, adding that whoever said the number of missing children is 10, is a liar.

Her words: "My son, Usman Tahir is in SS2 class. He is still missing. One of the students who returned Sunday night said they were 520; that includes two that were killed and himself, who escaped.

"So whoever, said that the missing children were 10 lied. "Today (Monday), another child just returned and he is being interviewed in the principal's office. So we are waiting to hear what the situation is with the missing children over there. Although, when he returned, one of the security personnel who brought him back said 15 more were on their way before dusk.

"We appeal to President Buhari and Governor Masari to come to our aid and rescue our wards. We cannot sleep and cannot eat," the grieving woman said.

Meanwhile, parents of the students, yesterday, besieged the school premises awaiting the return of their missing children.

This came on the heels of the promise made by Minister of Defence, Major-General Bashir Magashi, retd, that the missing school children would soon be released.

Abduction confirms service chiefs not in charge — Northern elders

Northern elders, in a statement, yesterday, by their National Coordinator, Engr Zana Goni and National Women Leader, Hajiya Mario Bichi, respectively, condemned the attack on the school children, saying the development that came few days after the decapitation of over 46 rice farmers in Zabarmari Village in Borno State, was disturbing.

They said: "The latest attack on Government Senior Secondary School, Kankara, where over 333 children are reportedly missing has further confirmed our position that our region is now at the mercy of terrorists, bandits and other criminal elements.

"And as a result of this, we strongly believe that time has come for our president to bring in fresh hope and clear directions on how best the country will strategise to overcome the present insecurity situation in the country in general.

"At the boiling point we have found ourselves in today, we strongly believe that it will not be out of place to seek assistance in dealing with these threats from outside.

"We would say in the strongest possible terms that there can be no justification for the deliberate targeting of innocent school children."

Further, they said: "Our president was elected by Nigerians and the same Nigerians have spoken through their representatives in the National Assembly. Our president should listen to them by dropping the service chiefs, who have since reached retirement age in the military and appoint new ones with fresh ideas to do the job for which we elected him to do."

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While insisting that the president listens to what they called "the voice of the people" by re-organising the security architecture of the country, the elders said: "The time has come when the entire country expects new

ideas, philosophy and method in the fight against insurgency in the country.

"The president's idea about insecurity has proved inadequate to deal with the threat to our lives and property. He needs to urgently change tactics and personnel in order to win the war against rising threats to the lives of Nigerians."

It's wake-up call to rejig security apparatus — Middle Belt Group

Convener of MBMJP, Mr Joe Bukka in a statement, yesterday, in Makurdi said: "Last Friday was another sad day in the history of our country. It goes to tell a lot about how porous the security of this country is and why President Buhari must act fast to address the ugly situation.

"The first thing we strongly advocate is that the President rejigs the security apparatus of this country by sacking the service chiefs and getting very competent people to help him tackle insecurity in the country.

"It is another slap on Nigeria that cannot be treated with kid gloves. No doubt we are obviously in a desperate situation at the moment and what we require now is a desperate action to address the situation.

"This is the time we must all stand together as a united people to fight this menace that has become a treat to unity, peace and stability of our country."

Bukka urge security agencies to take steps to rescue the kidnapped students and cautioned that the incident will further discourage parents from sending their children and wards to schools in the northern part of the country.

Top operatives don't want end to insecurity — JNI

The Jama'atu Nasril Islam, JNI, while reacting to the Kankara abduction of school boys by bandits, said, "How can one explain the movement of

bandits in their hundreds, on motorcycles without being detected?

"What happens to intelligence-gathering, that this heinous plan was not uncovered before it was executed? How come the bandits took their time, gathered the school boys, heaped them on bikes and whisked them away without being rounded up by the security agencies?

"Mr President needs to hearken to the call of Nigerians, revamp the security architecture and address the nation."

President-General of JNI, His Eminence Sa'ad Abubakar III, the Sultan of Sokoto said JNI received with absolute shock the most unfortunate news of the abduction of students from GSSS, Kankara, after shooting the security guard on the spot, about 10:45pm, on Friday.

Dr Khalid Aliyu, Secretary-General, JNI, in a statement, explained that the abduction, in commando style, was one tragedy too many, coming on the heels of the infamous Zabarmari massacre just not long ago.

"This indeed is a sad reminder of the abductions of school girls in Chibok and Dapchi of Borno and Yobe States of North-East Nigeria, and it's an indicator that the powers that be don't read the present through the spectacle of the past; this wouldn't have happened.

"For the umpteenth time, we will continue to ask: For how long shall the masses continue to live in fear? For how long shall the federal and state governments continue to issue empty condemnations whenever there are tragedies? Is the government and the security agencies so overwhelmed and thus cannot secure the citizens? Are there insurmountable challenges or acts of sabotage that the government is hiding from the public? These and many more questions that continue to bedevil every discerning mind within and outside Nigeria."

Another tragedy of worsening insecurity—NLC

Meanwhile, the Nigeria Labour Congress, NLC, yesterday, described weekend attack and abductions of some of students of the Government

Science Secondary School, Kankara, as another outrageous tragedy of the nation's worsening insecurity.

NLC in a statement by its President, Ayuba Wabba, also berated government over media reports that protesting parents of the abducted students and their sympathizers were tear-gassed, saying "the right to peaceful protest is guaranteed by our constitution and no one should abridge it.

"We are outraged by the abduction of some of the students of the Government Science Secondary School, Kankara. As at last count, over 300 are said to be still missing. Although, the reaction time of our security personnel appears to be an improvement on previous school raids, it still did not preclude the bandits from taking away with them a sizable number of the students. In our view, this abduction would not have happened, had adequate precautions been taken.



"It is common knowledge that Katsina and Zamfara, both in the North-West, have been the epicentres of extreme violent banditry in the past two or more years with abductions and killings on a regular basis. Villages or communities have been pillaged and reduced to rubble, strangulating in the process all economic activities, especially farming.

"Given this scenario and precedents (Chibok, etc), it should have been obvious that Kankara was waiting to happen for two reasons: schools are vulnerable; male schools in particular are rich recruiting grounds. The fact that our security personnel appear to be stretched thin is no reason not to have taken necessary security initiative to protect schools.

"Although we do not count ourselves as security experts, we are surprised that going after abductors of hundreds of students in the bare, arid savannah often is often made to look like searching for a needle in a haystack.

"We are worried that security personnel are reported to have tear-gassed protesting parents of the abducted students and their sympathisers. We need not remind the authorities that the right to peaceful protest is guaranteed by our constitution and no one should abridge it. We recall that a similar protest in the state over escalating the insecurity situation was similarly broken up and its leaders arrested."

Thugs disrupt CNG's security summit in Kaduna

Meanwhile, thugs wielding dangerous weapons invaded the Arewa House, Kaduna, yesterday, where they chased after officials of the Coalition of Northern Groups, CNG ,who were there for a security summit.

Abdulaziz Suleiman, spokesman of CNG, in a statement, explained that even security guards had to run for their lives.

According to him, "we regret to announce that armed thugs numbering hundreds were unleashed on the Arewa House venue of the security summit hosted by the CNG on December 14.

"The summit aimed to discuss ways to achieve synergy between communities and government security and design a uniform approach to the current security situation in the North.

"Participants at the meeting included retired military officers, retired police officers, religious leaders, traditional rulers, various women, youths and trade associations."

The CNG said just as the meeting was kicking off, "sponsored armed thugs stormed the auditorium after subduing the civil guards at the gate.

"They overturned tables, shattered glasses, attacked the guests and officials, wounding several people and smashing vehicles parked in the premises.

"It is disturbing that a battalion of armed thugs can stroll freely across the streets of central Kaduna, wielding dangerous weapons without the intervention of the security. Security only arrived hours after the thugs had left."

How dignitaries broke windows to escape

A resource person at the botched security summit organised by CNG, in Kaduna, Dr Yahuza Getso, gave a graphic detail of how dignitaries escaped death at the Arewa House Kaduna, yesterday.

Speaking in an interview with the BBC Hausa Service, Getso, said: "There were religious leaders, traditional rulers, rights activists and security agents from the 19 Northern states.

"The objective of the gathering was to deliberate on the unending security problem in the North, which is disturbing the region and to proffer solutions.

"While we were about starting the summit, after the prayer session, the youths, young boys invaded the venue, wielding sticks, swords and other dangerous weapons. They started breaking windows at the Arewa House

auditorium where we were seated. They started hitting the people, important dignitaries started fleeing through the windows.

"Windows were broken to enable very important people to escape, escape routes were forcefully created so as to have more passages and escape routes.

"The representative of the DSS was there. He was there during the attack. If they were not informed, they would not be there. They were notified, that's why they were there.

"We thank Almighty Allah, amongst them we can identify some. The person that led them was identified. Arewa House security officers were able to arrest him and handed him over to the police."

Northern Elders condemn attack

Meanwhile, Northern Elders Forum, NEF, has condemned the attack on a meeting focused on the security challenges of the region by hired thugs in Kaduna.

The forum described the attack as a threat to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, which is condemnable.

NEF's Director, Publicity and Advocacy, Dr Hakeem Baba-Ahmed, in a statement said: "We condemn in the strongest possible terms, the attack by hired hoodlums on a peaceful and legitimate meeting convened by Coalition of Northern Groups to discuss appropriate responses to the outrageous abduction of schoolchildren in Katsina.

"It is important to mention that the meeting was also being attended by older Nigerians, who had given their entire lives to the service of the nation.

"This cowardly and crude attempt to muffle national outrage at increasingly deteriorating security of life and property in Nigeria will mark a new low in state of the nation."

My son may be hungry, thirsty in the bush—father

A father whose 13-year old son was among the students abducted from a boarding school in Katsina State, has told the BBC Hausa service that he was worried because his son might be hungry and thirsty in the bush.

He however, expressed hope that the military have gone inside the bushes in search of the students.

"We don't have any cogent information about the students. I've a son; he is 13 years old in Form 1, going to Form 2. Till date, we've no information about my son that is pleasant. We are worried, he may be hungry, thirsty.

"But we've seen the steps taken by government, we saw the security agents going into the bushes. We hope they will rescue our children, in good health," he said.

Similarly, a mother told the BBC Hausa Service that she was finding it hard to stand on her feet due to the trauma of missing her child. She prayed that Almighty Allah will give the state governor the wisdom to solve the security problem in the state.

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