

I was in same kidnappers' den with my daughter — Father of Jangebe schoolgirl

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...Says 'I told my daughter not to recognise me'

...They exposed us, our children to cold for 14 wks, says Raliat, another victim

...As Zamfara govt secure release of 10 abducted victims

...Says no ransom paid

Governor Bello Matawalle of Zamfara State, in the early hours of yesterday, secured the release of 10 persons kidnapped by bandits 14 weeks ago in Gwaram community of Talata Mafara Local Government Area.

Among those freed were three men, including the father of one of the abducted Jangebe schoolgirls, four women and three children.

Narrating his ordeal in the hands of the kidnappers, Iliya Gwaram, father of one of the abducted Jangebe schoolgirls, who was also kidnapped, said he was shocked to see his daughter among the kidnapped schoolgirls when they were herded into the abductors' den.

He said he quickly told his daughter not to act as if they knew each other, and that they were able to keep their relationship a secret while in captivity.

He said: "I have been in captivity with these other people for more than three months when on that Friday morning, I saw the schoolgirls being brought into where we were camped by our abductors.

"At first, I didn't know who they were or where they were coming from, until I saw the face of my scared daughter looking at me.

"I quickly told some of the girls who were brought along with her and sat near me to tell my child not to show any indication that she even knew me.

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"The girls were brave enough and they kept our little secret up to the last day of their four days stay with us.

"I never cried in the whole of my life like I cried the day the girls were taken back because I felt it was the last time I would see my daughter.

"Fortunately and unknown to me, my daughter informed Governor Matawalle of our whereabouts and the poor health conditions we were, which led to our freedom today

(yesterday) as facilitated by the governor and his security people.”

Asked if ransom was paid to secure their freedom, Gwaram said he had no idea, adding that all that mattered to them was to return to their homes.

He said: “Look at those two women that were rescued with me, N2 million was said to have been raised by their relatives to give to the bandits more than two months ago.

“But the money could not be traced as it was suspected that it was a different gang that intercepted the man bringing the money and took it from him.”

Gwaram said his daughter would continue with her education, despite the kidnapping incident.

He said: “If she wasn’t educated, she would have exposed me when she saw me and that would have put the two of us in danger. I thank God for that and I will continue to pray that such a thing never happens to even my worst enemy.”

They exposed us, our children to cold for 14 wks, says Raliat, another victim

Another victim, who identified herself simply as Raliat, said they spent 14 weeks in the forest with their kids, noting that they were exposed to the cold weather.

The lady said the bandits offered them rice and beans to cook, after which they ate during a two-week period.

She said: “We spent 14 weeks in the forest with all this cold weather, we were outside with our kids, there was nothing to cover our body with. They came looking for Ubankasan Gurau but he was not around, they met his father and killed him.

“They went to his uncle’s house and packed all the family members that were around. They said they pity our kids but still, they did not release us. None of our kids died, it’s God that saved us.

“They give us rice and beans, we are the ones cooking, and they have pots there. They use to give us oil and salt with Maggi but later they stopped.”

No ransom paid — Zamfara govt

Meanwhile, announcing the release of the kidnap victims, yesterday, Zamfara State Commissioner for Security and Home Affairs, Abubakar Dauran, said they were rescued without ransom through the peace initiative of the state government.

He explained that the state government would continue with the peace dialogue, noting that it was paving way for lasting peace in the state.

Dauran said: “We are witnessing another achievement in security where 10 people were rescued, those that were kidnapped at Gwaram in Talata-Mafara Local Government which, among them, is the father of one of the released students of Government Girls Secondary School, Jangebe.

“I believe if it is not dialoguing that we are doing in Zamfara State, we cannot definitely rescue these victims. We are still with this dialogue and with a non-kinetic approach, we must continue to do it because of the situation we have in Zamfara State. We know it’s critical but we are achieving a lot of success.

“Recently, we rescued 279 Jangebe schoolgirls. Before that, we have recovered about 20 sophisticated weapons from the son of Buharin Daji, which he voluntarily surrendered with a different caliber of live ammunition.”