



LETTER OF CREDENCE FROM S-KOREAN AMBASSADOR—President Muhammadu Buhari receives Letter of Credence from Amb. Kim Young Chae, Ambassador of South Korea to Nigeria in State House, Abuja, yesterday. State House photo.

PARENTS TO EL-RUFAI: Negotiate with bandits before they kill our children

●Bandits open fire on traders in Benue market, kill one, injure 13 ●Troops kill two, recover AK-47 rifle ●Bandits kill 9 in Birnin-Gwari, Giwa LGAs in Kaduna ●CSOs oppose payment of ransom to bandits, kidnappers

By Peter Duru,
Gabriel Ewepu &
Ibrahim Hassan

KADUNA—Parents of the 39 abducted students of Federal College of Forestry Mechanisation in Mando Igabi Local Government Area of Kaduna State, yesterday, appealed to the state governor, Nasir el-Rufai, to negotiate with the bandits and secure the release of their wards.

The governor had always insisted that his government would not negotiate with bandits, insisting that they needed to be completely routed by security agents.

The plea of parents of the kidnapped students came as bandits, suspected to be gang members of the late Terwase Agwaza, alias Gana, on Wednesday evening opened fire on traders at Abaji in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of

Benue State, killing one and injuring 13 others.

Two of the bandits were, however, killed by troops of the joint military operation, code-named Operation Whirl Stroke, OPWS, who were said to have responded to distress calls promptly.

In a similar manner, bandits in the early hours of yesterday, killed nine persons in separate attacks in Birnin Gwari and Giwa local government areas of Kaduna State.

This is even as some

Civil Organisations, CSOs, yesterday, opposed alleged payment of ransom by governments to bandits and kidnappers to free victims.

Abducted students still in captivity, 2 weeks after

Speaking yesterday on Channels Television's breakfast programme, Sunrise Daily, a member of staff of the college and representative of the parents, Sani Friday, expressed grave concern that two weeks after gunmen abducted the students, they were yet to be released.

It will be recalled that bandits attacked the school on March 12 and kidnapped 23 female, 16 male students and later demanded N500 million ransom to free the.

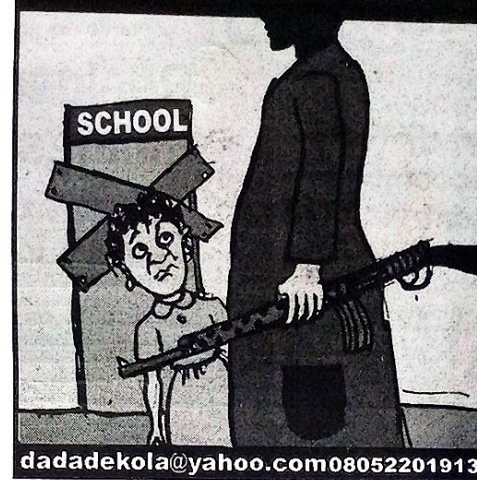
He said the parents were afraid that the bandits might kill their children if government used force.

Friday, whose two daughters were among the students in captivity, appealed to the state governor, Nasir El-Rufai, to adjust his no-payment-of-ransom stance to facilitate the release of the students.

He said: "It is this state governor who, sometimes ago, told the entire Kaduna State that if it costs him to pay bandits to stop killing citizens of Kaduna State, he will pay them.

"Now, the state government came out, even before the abduction of our students in the Federal College of Forestry, that it is wrong to negotiate with bandits and that he is not going to negotiate.

POCKET CARTOON



"After that statement, this incident happened and it is based on that statement that the government is standing that it will not negotiate. But he (El-Rufai) made a statement before that he can do anything for the bandits to stop killing, so we want him to do something."

Gunmen open fire on traders in Benue market

Similarly, two armed bandits dressed in military camouflage, said to be loyalists of the late militia leader, Terwase Agwaza, alias Gana, were on Wednesday reportedly killed in a gun battle with troops of the joint military operation code-named Operation Whirl Stroke, OPWS, at Abaji in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State, hours after they opened fire on traders at Abaji market, killing one person and injuring 13 others.

Vanguard gathered that the troops of OPWS responded to a distress call from the market at the time of the attack.

A source said on getting to the scene, the attackers while beating a

retreat engaged the soldiers in a shootout.

"It all started at about 4:30 to 5pm on Wednesday when we started hearing sporadic gunshots at Abaji market and people ran for their lives.

"We quickly alerted troops of OPWS who responded promptly and came to repel the bandits. In the gun battle that ensued, the soldiers killed two of the bandits and recovered their AK47 rifle and many live ammunition but others escaped with bullet wounds.

"It was later discovered that one of the traders was killed by the bandits, while 13 others sustained bullet wounds but they were all rushed to hospitals in Katsina-Ala," the source said.

When contacted, the Chairman of Katsina-Ala LGA, Mr. Alfred Atera, who confirmed the attack and the number of casualty, blamed it on loyalists of the late Gana who were demanding revenue from markets in Katsina-Ala LGA.

"They are Gana's men, they do not want any market to operate in

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