

How gunmen stormed train, rained terror on passengers

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...Anguish, as 8 die, 26 injured, scores missing

...Survivors, families recount ordeal

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...Says 398 passengers bought a ticket; 362 validated for trip

...Buhari directs security agencies to rescue kidnapped passengers

...Says no one should hold Nigeria to ransom

...Calls for immediate repair of damaged lines, resumption of normal service

...Challenge of insecurity constant — CDS Irabor

...Bombard terrorist enclaves, Senate tells military

...We need helicopters, drones, others to tackle insecurity on rail routes — Amaechi

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Survivors and families of victims of Monday night's terrorist attack on the Abuja-Kaduna train, yesterday recounted their ordeals in the hands of the attackers.

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Recall that the terrorists had blown the rail track with an explosive at about 7.45 pm at Dutse village in Chikun Local Government Area, just a few kilometres from the Rigasa train station, forcing the train with 362 passengers to derail.

Those killed, injured

Among those confirmed dead at press time yesterday were the secretary-general of the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria, TUC, Musa-Lawal Ozigi, Kwara State chairman of the union, Akin Akinsola and Dr Chinelo Megafu Nwando.

Also shot, injured and currently receiving treatment as a result of the attack are former deputy governor of Zamfara State, Ibrahim Wakkala, Katsina State Health Commissioner, Mariatu Bala Usman, and one of the wives of the slain TUC scribe.

The incident forced the Nigerian Railway Corporation, NRC, to suspend further operations on the route, as President Muhammadu Buhari yesterday directed security agencies to ensure that all passengers kidnapped were rescued.

The Senate also called on the Army and Air Force to, as a matter of urgency, bombard terrorist enclaves, with a view to restoring peace and stability in the country, just as the Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant-General Faruk Yahaya, charged his men to hunt down the terrorists.

The attack also forced the cancellation of the 13th Colloquium organised to celebrate the 70th birthday of the national leader of the All Progressives Congress, APC, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, in Lagos.

Survivors, families recount ordeals

One of the survivors of the train attack in Abuja Monday night, Aisha Bindawa, described how she felt after a co-passenger beside her was shot by the terrorists.

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“I never thought I would post again, after the man beside me was shot. I had already started feeling my soul leaving my body too but Allah has a better plan for us.

“May the souls of the departed be In Peace. May Allah reunites the abducted with their families,” she tweeted yesterday.

For relations of Farida Sule Mohammed, the long wait for her arrival came to an abrupt end yesterday when her body was found among those killed during the attack.

Funeral prayer for her held at the Yahaya Road Masjid in Kaduna GRA attracted many of her relations and friends who continued to pray for the repose of her soul.

At the headquarters of the National Board for Technical Education, NBTE, Kaduna, it was a sad Tuesday as staff mourned the death of Abdu Kofar Mata. He was also among those killed by the rampaging terrorists.

Alhaji Yusuf Atta, a Kaduna-based civil servant, said his mother and sister who boarded the train in Abuja had not been found after the unfortunate train attack.

According to him, “they arrived in Abuja from Saudi Arabia where they performed the lesser Hajj. They were on the ill-fated train to Kaduna but have not to be seen.”

Earlier while the train was under siege, Dr Nwando had tweeted that she was shot by the bandits and had solicited prayers.

At St. Gerard’s Catholic Hospital, Kaduna, Chinelo’s colleagues were in a mourning mood.

Maimuna Ibrahima, a survivor, said: “All of a sudden, at about 8 pm, we started hearing gunshots from outside. We all went down inside the train. The bandits gained access to the train by forcing the door open.

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Another survivor, Fatima Shaibu, said: “The bandits rushed into the train twice and abducted passengers, took them into the bush. I saw them, they put on veils around their faces. They are young men of between 18 and 20 years of age.

“They were shouting ‘Allahu Akbar’ and they spoke in a foreign language. They did not speak English, they did not speak Fulani, and they did not speak Hausa.”

A medical doctor in the hospital said 11 other survivors were in a military hospital receiving treatment.

“Only two survivors were still receiving medical attention in our hospital, two have died, including Dr Chinelo Nwando who was a staff of our hospital,” he said.

He said late Chinelo did her NYSC with the hospital, adding that when the management saw that she was very good on the job, it decided to employ her.

“But last month, she resigned because she said her parents said she should come to Canada to join them. So she travelled to Abuja to process her travel documents. It was when she was coming back to Kaduna that she was killed in that incident. She was very young and hard-working,” the doctor said.

An aide of the former Zamfara deputy governor, Ibrahim Wakkala, said he (Wakkala) was returning from the APC national convention when he was shot in the cross-fire between the terrorists and the military and has been moved to a military hospital for treatment.

Spokesperson of the All Progressives Congress, APC, in Zamfara State, Yusuf Idris, who also confirmed the incident, said:

“He was initially abducted but was rescued by the DSS and military; it was in the process he sustained a gunshot injury in the leg.

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Relations and friends of other missing passengers have continued to besiege hospitals in search of loved ones.

NRC suspends Abuja-Kaduna services

Consequent to the attack, the Nigerian Railway Corporation, NRC, yesterday suspended its Abuja-Kaduna train operations.

The NRC announced its decision in a terse statement on Twitter.

“Dear passengers, due to unforeseen circumstances, train operations along the Abuja-Kaduna route have been temporarily suspended. Further communication would be given in due course,” NRC tweeted.

The NRC said 398 passengers bought tickets for the trip, adding that 362 were validated and got on board the train for the journey.

The CEO, Fidet Okhiria, also confirmed that eight passengers died in the attack, while 26 were injured.

The Kaduna State Government stated also yesterday that the evacuation of passengers trapped in the train had been concluded by security forces, officials of Kaduna State Emergency Management Agency, SEMA, and the Nigerian Red Cross.

Samuel Aruwan, Commissioner, Ministry of Internal Security and Home Affairs, who disclosed this in a statement, said: “Passengers who sustained injuries and other fatalities have been moved to hospitals.

“Passengers were evacuated from different hard-to-reach areas in forests and rocky locations in Audujongom, off the Kaduna-Abuja Road.