

Maiduguri flood disaster: 2 die in stampede for food



- Hunger pushes non-victims into IDP camps for food palliatives
 - Civilian JTF rape women, take our food—Victim
 - River overflow cause of flooding—FG
- By Ndahi Marama & Gabriel Ewepu

In their moments of distress and agony, displaced victims of the flood that caused devastation in Maiduguri, Borno state capital, who were being sheltered in Bakkasi Internally Displaced Persons, IDP, Camp, cried out yesterday that their women were being raped by members of the Civilian Joint Task Force, JTF, who also took their food and were passing it to their friends and girlfriends.

Some of the flood victims who spoke in Hausa language to Arise television correspondent at the camp said their greatest need was food even as many residents who were not affected by the flood had found their way into camp to benefit from the palliatives meant for the flood victims. They also said two persons died from a stampede in the camp while trying to collect food. The state government of Babagana Zulum has been supplying food to the victims. Zulum even shared cash with the victims.

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Speaking with Arise television at Bakkasi camp, one of the victims said, “The civilian JTF are raping our women and they are confiscating our food which they gave to their friends and girlfriends. What we need most now is food.

That is our greatest need. We are hungry. Yesterday (Thursday) in a stampede in this camp while struggling to collect food, two persons died. The flood was devastating, we are lucky we are alive”. The University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital was also badly affected and patients had to be moved to the upper floors as the lower floors were completely flooded. Equipment worth hundreds of millions was affected.

It was also gathered that due to the current economic hardships, many residents who were not affected by the flood have stormed the various camps where the victims were given temporary shelter claiming to be victims of the flood to benefit from the food and other relief materials.

At the Bakkasi Camp where about 10,000 victims were profiled on the day of the incident, it was gathered that the number has increased as many of them were not genuine victims.

Recall that initially, Governor Babagana Zulum said, over one million residents were affected, with more than 200,000 victims displaced and taking refuge at different accessible camps created by the government. The governor later reviewed the figure of the affected residents to be 2 million. One of the victims from Abbaganaram, who is taking refuge with his family of five at Bakkasi camp, Mallam Yahaya Usman Abba, said he saw one of his friends who is a resident of Dala community that was not affected by the flood at the camp claiming he was also a victim. “I can testify to you that there are many fake flood victims in this camp. Dala is one of the communities not affected by the flood, as it is located behind Bakkasi camp, but I saw one of my friends in this camp collecting palliatives”. Abba stated.

It was also observed that the number of street beggars in such areas as Bags Road, Maduganari-Biu -Biu road, and Maiduguri-Gomari Airport road has increased, as many vulnerable and less privileged individuals have taken advantage of the situation disguising themselves as victims of the flood to beg for alms.

River overflow cause of flooding —FG

Meanwhile, the Federal Government, Friday, declared that the Alau Dam in Maiduguri, the Borno State Capital, did not collapse as speculated, rather it was the Ngadda river overflow that caused the devastating flood. The Minister of Water Resources and Sanitation, Engr Joseph Utsev stated this during a press briefing on the situation of the Maiduguri flood, and other issues.

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Utsav alongside the Minister of State for Water Resources and Sanitation, Hon Bello Goronyo, explained that the flood was caused by massive inflow from Ngadda River, a major tributary of River Yedzaram and that he and his technical team had gone there to assess the situation of the flood.

He also expressed commitment to do a thorough overhaul and upgrade of the Alau Dam, saying it was non-negotiable, and any poor performance by contractors or officials involved would not go unpunished. He promised to provide sanitation kits and water treatment facilities to displaced persons as part of the ministry's immediate intervention.

He said: "We didn't envisage that the level of the water that comes this year will be of this magnitude. Because of climate change, the downpour was in excess, and the rivers could not contain the water, while more water was unexpected was being spilt into Alau Dam.

"This flood disaster that affected Maiduguri and Jere areas of Borno State was largely due to overflow of water from Alau Dam which is about 10 kilometres from Maiduguri city centre owing to massive inflow from Ngadda river, a major tributary of River Yedzaram.

However, he warned that there would be serious flooding in the Niger Delta region and other southern states, hence the government and people should activate emergency measures to mitigate the impact.

"As we mourn the losses in Borno, Yobe, Jigawa, Bauchi and other states affected by flooding, the attention of Nigerians is hereby drawn to the probable river flooding on rivers Niger and Benue and some of their tributaries. The daily flow on these rivers indicates a significant increase in flow levels tending towards RED alert. This warning means that a large volume of water is moving through our rivers down to the delta region. Therefore, we should increase vigilance on all ramifications and step up proactive measures to address any eventual flooding events in the southern part of the country", he said.