

## British High Commission, CDS decry killing of 38 hostages after ransom payment



**By Kingsley Omonobi & Ibrahim Hassan-Wuyo**

**The British High Commission, yesterday, decried the weekend killing of 38 kidnapped hostages in Zamfara State, even after over N50 million ransom had been paid.**

**This came on a day the Chief of Defence Staff, CDS, Gen. Christopher Musa, issued stern warning to Nigerians against providing any form of support to bandits.**

**Reacting to the killing in Abuja, British Deputy High Commissioner, Ms Gill Lever, who lamented that only 18 of the hostages were released after the ransom payment, said: “Very frankly, I want to express my condolences to the people of Zamfara State over that horrible kidnap where even when ransom was paid, only a few people were released and others murdered.**

**“It’s an unspeakable crime that has impacts on society, on communities, on families. It damages people’s mental health and physical well-being, retards economic progress and all the other things that we know well. And we must bring an end to this.**

**“We must stop this. We must limit this. Because we all feel passionately and keenly what the terrible impacts of kidnapping do. So my condolences to the people of that state, and to the affected people and to their families and their friends. This is what we want to try and stop.”**

**We’ll treat anyone supporting bandits as enemy of state, CDS warns**

**Meanwhile, speaking at an interactive session on government-citizen engagement organised by the Sir Ahmadu Bello Memorial Foundation, SABMF, in Kaduna, the CDS said anyone contributing to the country’s insecurity, whether directly or indirectly, was an enemy of the state.**

**“Anyone who is contributing one way or the other to the downfall of our country is an enemy of the state, and we must face him squarely and defeat him,” he said. Musa emphasised the military’s commitment to securing the north and the entire country.**

He said: “We will never let the north down. We will never let Nigeria down. We are ready for whatever it takes to succeed.

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“We’re committed; we will stay awake 24/7 to ensure that the north is free, Nigeria is secure, and any enemy of the state will be pursued relentlessly until total peace and tranquillity are restored.”

The CDS also highlighted the importance of community cooperation in security operations, saying “if the people are not happy with what we are doing, then we are not succeeding.

“Commanders must ensure they carry the community along and protect them. Our operations are not aimed at harming innocent people but targeting the bad guys.”

He warned that those supplying bandits with fuel, food, or other resources were equally culpable.

“If we find out that you are part of the criminal network by supplying them, you are also a bandit, you are also a terrorist,” Musa said.

The CDS urged Nigerians to avoid any involvement with terrorists and bandits, noting that denying these groups support is crucial to their defeat.

“The terrorists and bandits live among us. If we continue to provide them with services, they will continue to thrive. But if we deny them, they will fizzle out.”

Musa noted that in the past two years, the armed forces had killed over 3,000 terrorists and bandits, secured the surrender of more than 120,000 insurgents and rescued upwards of 2,000 kidnapped victims.

He said over 2,300 arms and 72,000 rounds of ammunition had been recovered across northern theatres of operation.