

ADC TO GOVERNMENT You Cannot Fight Insurgency By Doing Deals With Bandits

1. The African Democratic Congress (ADC) rejoices with the families and communities whose loved ones have been rescued from the recent wave of kidnappings across the country, including the worshippers abducted from Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), Oke-Isegun, Eruku, Kwara State, and the schoolchildren taken from Government Girls Comprehensive Secondary School, Maga, Kebbi State.

2. While we are delighted that these citizens can finally reunite with their families, we must reiterate our long-standing position that these abductions

should never have occurred in the first place if the government were alive to its constitutional responsibilities. What the country is witnessing today is the consequence of an administration distracted by politics and behaving less like a democratic government and more like an occupying force. It is telling that it took a chastening comment from President Trump to provoke even the slightest response from our government.

3. Yet, even as we welcome the safe return of the victims, we remain deeply concerned about the opaque and troubling manner in which their release was secured.

4. The conflicting accounts coming from different government officials make it clear that the Federal Government is not being honest with Nigerians about the circumstances surrounding the release of the abducted victims. We strongly believe that this administration is negotiating deals with insurgents. It is especially alarming to hear the Inspector General of Police state that the perpetrators of the Kwara church attack were not arrested because they "came out voluntarily for the peace talk." Equally troubling is the comment attributed to the Presidential Spokesman, Bayo Onanuga, suggesting that the abductees were released simply because the government and security operatives "asked them nicely."

5. This raises serious questions: Is the Nigerian government paying ransom to insurgents? What exactly was exchanged for the so-called "surrender of weapons" by the kidnappers? And if these bandits truly surrendered weapons, what prevents them from simply acquiring new ones and continuing their criminal enterprise, if they are not going to be arrested and brought to face justice? What happened to the people they shot and killed in cold blood? Where is justice for the families of those victims if their murderers are allowed to go scot-free because government needs a quick-win to celebrate?

6. The ADC is deeply concerned that if negotiation with bandits has become the government's strategy for tackling insurgency and the surge in kidnappings, then Nigeria is on a dangerous and misguided path. It is the approach of an administration searching for shortcuts instead of confronting the problem decisively. By appeasing insurgents in this manner, the government is, in effect, expanding the banditry economy.

7. Predictably, the bandits returned to the same Ekiti Local Government the very next day after the release of the churchgoers, abducting 11 more people in Isaac Community, Ekiti Local Government Area, of Kwara State. This pattern shows clearly that a system that focuses on "rescuing" victims without bringing perpetrators to justice only reinforces the vicious cycle of terror.

CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS

8. A few days ago, in response to the escalating abductions of schoolchildren, the Federal Government ordered the closure of 47 Unity Schools Across the Country. Several state governments have followed suit, shutting down schools and sending children home.

9. While the government may consider this the safest short-term option, it sends a dangerous message to the terrorists. A government that quietly negotiates with insurgents and then shuts down schools to avoid further kidnappings has, in effect, conceded ground to terror. By closing schools,



the very ideology Boko Haram was built upon, and signaling weakness where strength is required.

10. This government is effectively telling the world that it cannot protect Nigeria's schoolchildren or safeguard our public institutions. It is admitting that it can no longer take responsibility for the security of the children entrusted to its care.

11. What we are witnessing is the creeping paralysis of our society and the gradual shutting down of our country. Terrorists are now dictating government decisions and reshaping the future of our children. What kind of nation abandons

its children to kidnappers and then closes their schools in surrender? How long will we continue to keep our children at home? And by what measure will this government decide that it is finally "safe" for them to return to school?

KIDNAPPED SCHOOLCHILDREN

12. At this moment, no one — not even the government — appears to know the exact number of schoolchildren kidnapped in the past week. This alone is a damning indictment of an administration that claims to take the security of its citizens seriously. How can the number of abducted children, or those still in captivity, be the subject of confusion in a country facing a national security crisis?

13. What is evident is that this government's alarming incompetence has become a security threat in itself. The Federal Government must immediately determine the precise number of schoolchildren being held captive following the recent abductions in Niger, Kebbi, and other states. It must also inform Nigerians of the concrete steps being taken to secure their release, along with a clear timeline for action.

14. These innocent children must not spend a day longer in captivity. The tragedy of the Chibok girls remains a deep scar on the nation's conscience, a reminder of a country that failed its own daughters. History must not be allowed to repeat itself. The government must bring back our children now.

SAFE SCHOOLS INITIATIVE AND THE WAY FORWARD

15. Even more troubling is the government's quiet abandonment of the Safe Schools Initiative and the Safe Schools Programme, both of which were designed to strengthen security around learning environments and prevent exactly the kind of mass abductions we are witnessing today. These programmes were not perfect, but they represented a commitment to protect children where they learn and grow. Today, that commitment has been discarded.

16. The government must now choose leadership over fear. If schools have been shut because they are unsafe, then the logical response is not retreat, but reinforcement. We call on the Federal Government to immediately deploy the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) to all Federal Unity Schools, so that children can safely return to the classroom without further delay. Protecting our schools is not optional, it is a constitutional responsibility.

17. The more we capitulate, the more ground we lose as a nation. Every day that schools remain closed, terrorists grow bolder, communities grow more fearful, and Nigeria drifts further from the promise of security and stability. A country that cannot protect its children cannot protect its future.

18. The ADC urges the government to act decisively, transparently, and responsibly. Reopen the schools. Secure the schools.

19. Bring our children home. And show Nigerians — and the world — that this nation will not bow to terror.

20. God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Delivered by Mallam Bolaji Abdullahi

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26/11/2025**