

Over 600 pupils, teachers abducted despite N145bn Safe-School scheme

No fewer than 603 students and teachers have been kidnapped in seven mass abductions across schools in Nigeria between March 2024 and May 2026 under President Bola Tinubu, as poor implementation of the N145 billion Safe Schools Initiative exposes pupils to armed attacks. The repeated attacks have raised questions over the effectiveness of the School Safety Programme Initiative introduced after the 2014 Chibok schoolgirls' abduction, with stakeholders blaming weak implementation, lack of infrastructure and poor security presence in many schools. The development has triggered renewed concerns over the safety of learning environments across the country. A media tallies of reported incidents across Kaduna, Sokoto, Kebbi, Niger, Kogi, Borno and Oyo states show that the victims were abducted in coordinated school raids by armed groups, with stakeholders warning that the crisis reflects the weakening implementation of school protection policies. The figure, which covers only major mass abductions, may be higher if isolated incidents involving primary, secondary and tertiary institutions are included. In the March 7, 2024, attack on the LEA Primary and Secondary School in Kuriga,

Daarul-Kitab Islamic Orphanage and School in Zariagi, Lokoja, alongside the proprietor's wife. On May 17, 2026, 42 students were abducted after suspected Boko Haram fighters invaded a school in Mussa, Askira-Uba Local Government Area of Borno State. Earlier, on May 15, 2026, armed men attacked three schools in Oriire Local Government Area of Oyo State, abducting 39 students and seven teachers, for a total of 46 victims. In 2023, the National Coordinator of the Safe Schools Initiative under the Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Halima Illiya, disclosed that the project was expected to begin in 18 states, covering at least 48 schools in each state. Illiya had acknowledged that schools in the country have struggled with persistent attacks by extremists, bandits, and kidnappers, which compelled the government to launch the Safe Schools Initiative. "We have sent an advanced team to the states. We have shortlisted 18 very high-risk states, and we hope to cover, between 2023 and 2026, the entire 36 schools.

We are expecting 48 schools from each state. "A National Plan on Financing Safe Schools was developed and launched in December 2022. The National Plan will be implemented between 2023 and 2026, with a total investment size of N144.8bn. "The plan proposes N32.58bn in 2023, N36.98bn in 2023, N37.15bn in 2025, and N38.03bn in 2026, respectively. To this end, the Federal Government has made a provision of N15bn in 2023." She also said that the plan was to cover 50 per cent of most of the public schools at risk of attacks over the medium term. A senior official blamed poor funding for the ineffectiveness of the programme. "You know, we are still talking to the states, and there is still a good response from them. Making the budget is not enough, you can put a budget, but funding becomes an issue. "So, what the Federal Government is doing, we are trying to agree with the states. We are making consultations. We have met with the Nigeria Governors Forum and the Minister of Finance. We are trying to arrive at something meaningful in the interest of the country. Consultations are going on, so many things are happening." The source added, "Safe Schools is an intervention. It is not something that will address our issue 100 per cent. The way to show commitment to Nigeria is by having a special intervention to support the education sector to ensure the safety of the community and the schools at large.



Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State, 137 schoolchildren were abducted by armed men on motorcycles, according to official figures later verified by authorities. Two days later, on March 9, 2024, gunmen stormed a Tsangaya school in Gidan Bakuso, Gada Local Government Area of Sokoto State, abducting 15 students, bringing the early 2024 total to 152 victims. On November 17, 2025, gunmen abducted 25 schoolgirls from Maga Comprehensive Girls' Secondary School in Kebbi State's Danko Wasagu Local Government Area.

Four days later, on November 21, 2025, St. Mary's Catholic School in Papiri, Niger State, was attacked, with 303 students and 12 teachers abducted, though authorities later said they were rescued in coordinated operations. In Kogi State, on April 26, 2026, armed men abducted 23 pupils from

If you look at it, it's very strategic. "What we are doing is not just focused on the school community. It is very strategic because these actors pass through the community. These actors are people within our communities. It's important to build the resilience of the community." On states that are

implementing the project, he stated, “The states that go the extra mile in keying into the Safe School Project include Plateau. They made a commitment. I knew about Bauchi State when we were engaging with the governors. They made a commitment. Jigawa State also gave us a centre. This discussion is still ongoing.” The Parent-Teacher Association and Nigeria Union of Teachers lamented that many schools still lack perimeter fencing and adequate security personnel, while calling for urgent government intervention to prevent further attacks.

Specifically, the National President of the Parent-Teacher Association, Haruna Danjuma, accused state governments of neglecting their responsibilities toward the education and security of schoolchildren. Speaking on the growing insecurity in schools, Danjuma said recent incidents of abductions and attacks on schools across different regions of the country had exposed the lack of commitment by governments to the safety of learners. “Governments at all levels do not have an interest in educating and taking care of the security of children in their schools. “We have seen attacks happen in different parts of the country. Teachers have been killed and children abducted, yet we have not seen enough action from those responsible,” he lamented. Danjuma described the failure of many states to embrace the Safe Schools initiative as evidence of a broader lack of commitment to education. “One indication is that they do not have an interest in those schools under their control. The Safe Schools programme is one of the most important issues every state governor should handle with utmost seriousness,” he said.

The PTA leader also alleged that education was not receiving the attention it deserved despite budgetary allocations by state governments. He stated, “You can see the money budgeted for education in every state, but it is difficult to see evidence that the funds have been spent on education. We don't know where the money is going.” Danjuma further bemoaned the poor infrastructure and inadequate security arrangements in many public schools. “You still find schools with dilapidated buildings, no perimeter fencing and no responsible security personnel strong enough to protect those on the premises,” he said. He accused state governors of prioritizing political interests over the welfare of students. “They take their own children to private schools while leaving ordinary Nigerian children to suffer,” the PTA leader stated. He warned that continued insecurity could discourage parents from enrolling their children in public schools “Very soon, Nigerian parents may find it difficult to send their children to public schools because they no longer feel safe,” he said. According to him, every state governor must take concrete measures to protect schools by providing adequate security infrastructure and personnel. “We are the parents and we need peace of mind. Our children should be able to attend school knowing they are safe. That is the responsibility of the government,” the PTA leader added.

Similarly, the National President of the Nigeria Union of Teachers, Audu Amba, said even states that had enrolled in the Safe Schools programme were yet to demonstrate significant improvements in school security. “Even the states that have done that, we have not seen any positive response

or positive protection as the case may be,” Amba said. He noted that schools had increasingly become targets of kidnappers and bandits. “Our schools have become exposed to danger in terms of kidnapping and banditry. The bandits have shifted their tactics and are now focusing their attention on schools. Our schools are no longer safe,” the NUT leader said. Amba stressed that while the government remained primarily responsible for security, communities also had important roles to play. “Security is everybody's business now. Government must provide security, but communities must also remain vigilant and provide information whenever they observe suspicious movements.” He warned that education could not thrive in an unsafe environment. “If the learning environment is not safe, then education can never take place. We are all beneficiaries of safe spaces and our schools deserve the same protection.” The NUT president urged state governments to fully embrace the Safe Schools initiative and collaborate with federal authorities to protect educational institutions nationwide. “State governments, local governments and the Federal Government should join forces to make sure that our schools are safe because attacks are increasingly being directed at schools,” he said. Amba also warned that teachers might be compelled to take stronger action if insecurity persisted. “If this situation continues, we have no reason not to shut down schools across the country. The safety of teachers and students must come first,” he said.

In Bauchi State, the Nigeria Union of Teachers called for improved protection of schools and stronger government commitment to safeguarding educators and learners, while urging authorities to clarify delays in adopting the Safe Schools programme. Bauchi NUT boss, Aminu Aliyu, who spoke against the backdrop of the protests against the abduction of Oyo State pupils and teachers, urged state ministries of education, which had yet to subscribe to the school safety initiative, to explain their position, stressing the urgent need to protect educational institutions from security threats. He lamented the continued abduction of teachers, students and education workers across parts of the country, noting that some victims remained in captivity without clear information on efforts toward their rescue. “Our teachers and learners must be protected within the school environment. Governments and security agencies must act swiftly to secure the release of abducted teachers, students and other victims still in captivity,” he said. The NUT chairman warned that teachers may be left with difficult choices if insecurity around schools continues unchecked. He also expressed concern over the emotional and psychological impact of kidnappings and attacks on teachers, students and their families, describing the situation as troubling. According to him, the union was worried over the continued detention of some abducted education workers and the absence of clear signs regarding their rescue. Aliyu disclosed that the national leadership of the union had directed branches at the state and local government levels to intensify advocacy on the need for safe and secure learning environments. He added that the union stood in solidarity with victims and their families, reaffirming its commitment to ensuring that teachers and learners carry out their activities in safety and dignity.