

7,825 ABDUCTED, N7.8BN RANSOM PAID: Huriwa Indicts FG, States, Demands Urgent Action Against Kidnapping

The Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA) says the revelation that 7,825 Nigerians were abducted and N7.8 billion paid as ransom within one year constitutes a direct indictment of the Federal and state governments over their failure to adequately protect the lives and property of citizens. The latest report by SBM Intelligence, titled *The Capture of the Kidnap Economy*, revealed that 7,825 persons were abducted and 1,142 killed in 1,713 kidnapping and related incidents between July 2025 and June 2026. HURIWA considers these figures alarming and unacceptable in a constitutional democracy where the protection of lives and property remains one of the fundamental responsibilities of government. The association therefore calls on President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and the National Assembly to urgently strengthen the country's legal framework for

and applicable legislation.

The association believes that the certainty and prompt enforcement of lawful punishment for the most heinous crimes can serve as an important deterrent, alongside effective policing, intelligence gathering and prosecution.

END REPENTANT TERRORIST REINTEGRATION WITHOUT ADEQUATE SAFEGUARDS

HURIWA is equally concerned about the continued rehabilitation, deradicalization and reintegration of persons described as repentant terrorists. While rehabilitation and deradicalization may have a place in counter-insurgency policy, the government must ensure that persons convicted of serious terrorism offences are not released or reintegrated without rigorous judicial, security and intelligence



combating kidnapping and terrorism. In particular, the National Assembly should conclude the necessary amendments to the counter-terrorism and other relevant laws to ensure that kidnapping linked to terrorism attracts severe punishment under the law, while guaranteeing fair trial, due process and the constitutional right of appeal. HURIWA also calls on state governments to stop treating the enforcement of existing death sentences as a political issue. Where competent courts have imposed capital punishment after due process and all legally available appeals have been exhausted, the law should be allowed to take its course in accordance with the Constitution

assessments. Terrorism is a grave crime against humanity and the Nigerian state must ensure that anyone convicted of terrorism-related offences faces the full consequences of the law. No rehabilitation programme should become a revolving door through which dangerous elements return to society without adequate safeguards.

DEPLOY TECHNOLOGY AGAINST KIDNAPPERS

HURIWA calls for the immediate deployment of modern technology in the fight against kidnapping and terrorism. The Federal Government and state

governments should invest heavily in drones, satellite surveillance, intelligence-gathering systems, digital forensics, communication interception capabilities and other technologies capable of identifying criminal hideouts, tracking movements and protecting vulnerable communities. There is no acceptable reason why kidnappers who negotiate ransom through mobile communications should repeatedly evade identification when security and intelligence agencies possess communication-monitoring and interception capabilities. The intelligence community must move beyond reactive operations and develop a proactive system capable of identifying kidnappers, their financiers, communication networks, logistics channels and safe havens before attacks occur.

TRACE AND DISRUPT RANSOM FLOWS

HURIWA also calls for a major restructuring and strengthening of Nigeria's financial intelligence architecture. The Federal Government should ensure that competent professionals are appointed to coordinate the effective tracing of illicit funds generated through kidnapping, terrorism and other organized crimes. The financial trail of ransom payments must be aggressively investigated, with the proceeds traced, frozen where legally possible and used as evidence to prosecute members of criminal networks and their financial facilitators. The billions of naira being paid to kidnappers are not merely ransom payments; they constitute a major source of financing for the acquisition of weapons, recruitment and expansion of criminal operations.

NSA MUST STRENGTHEN INTELLIGENCE COORDINATION

The alarming scale of successful kidnappings and ransom collections points to serious weaknesses in intelligence gathering, sharing and operational coordination. HURIWA therefore calls on the National Security Adviser to establish a stronger and more effective joint intelligence and operational framework involving the military, police, Department of State Services, financial intelligence agencies and other relevant security institutions. Nigeria cannot continue to have several security agencies collecting intelligence separately without a sufficiently coordinated mechanism for analyzing, sharing and acting on such intelligence in real time.

FOREST GUARDS MUST BE PROPERLY EQUIPPED

HURIWA also believes that the forest guard initiative can only succeed if the Federal and state

governments demonstrate genuine commitment to recruitment, training, equipment and effective deployment. The current experiment has been undermined by inadequate preparation, funding and operational coordination. Forest guards should be properly trained and equipped to provide local intelligence and support conventional security forces in denying kidnappers and terrorists access to forests and other hideouts. They should operate within clearly defined legal and operational frameworks and in close partnership with the military, police and intelligence agencies.

PROTECT SCHOOLS, RURAL COMMUNITIES AND HIGHWAYS

The government must also establish dedicated security strategies for schools, rural communities and vulnerable transport corridors. The resurgence of mass abductions demonstrates the need for stronger protection of schools and communities located in areas vulnerable to terrorist and bandit attacks. HURIWA recommends the establishment of rapid-response units, expansion of community-based intelligence networks, improved protection for whistle-blowers and stronger surveillance of kidnapping hotspots. The government must also address the economic conditions that make vulnerable youths susceptible to recruitment by criminal organizations, while ensuring that convicted criminals do not exploit rehabilitation programmes to return to violent activities.

GOVERNMENT MUST ACT NOW

The revelation that thousands of Nigerians were abducted within a single year, with billions of naira paid to criminal groups, should be treated as a national emergency. The primary constitutional responsibility of the Federal and state governments is to protect the lives and property of citizens. Nigerians cannot continue to live in fear while kidnappers operate sophisticated ransom businesses across the country. HURIWA therefore demands immediate, coordinated and measurable action from the President, governors, National Assembly and security agencies. The era of reacting to kidnappings after victims have been taken must end. Government must dismantle the criminal networks, disrupt their financial channels, penetrate their communication systems, deny them access to forests and other hideouts, rescue victims and ensure that those convicted are appropriately punished under the law. Nigeria cannot afford to allow kidnapping to become a permanent criminal industry and a major source of funding for terrorism and organized violence.