

DECLARE A STATE OF EMERGENCY ON INSECURITY NOW!

The various atrocities, killings, destruction, banditry, Kidnapping and all forms of criminality going on in different parts of the country has reached an alarming stage that no determined and serious government should look away. What Nigerians are witnessing today is so traumatic and horrifying that if not urgently addressed could snowball into a great anarchy and lawlessness. Bandits, terrorists and kidnappers strike at any point in time irrespective of where and who is involved. They swoop at their victims at will, maim, shoot, kill and kidnap as many as possible without any form of resistance. They leave behind trails of deaths, sorrow, pain and anguish. This has continued almost every other day unabated and the situation is creating fear and heightened insecurity across the nation.

We believe that without a decisive action now, the situation will degenerate into a crisis proportion, further endangering innocent lives and undermining national security. The kidnapping epidemic has evolved from sporadic criminal activity into a full-blown lucrative industry, with criminal-minded individuals, bandit groups and terrorist groups adopting it as a primary source of revenue. This alarming trend, even in the face of security measures being put in place, has not only deepened insecurity but also paved the way for other forms of violent crimes, severely destabilizing the nation. Since the beginning of the year, Nigeria has witnessed a dramatic and disturbing series of abductions. As of today, there are undeterminable numbers of reported and unreported hapless Nigerians in the hands and mercy of kidnappers in various forests and fortresses across the country. Nigerians are no longer safe in their own country. They are not safe along the highways, they are not safe on the streets, they are not safe in schools, in farms, in churches nor mosques; not even in the sanctuary of their homes as bandits and kidnappers have laid siege everywhere! It is quite alarming the frequently reported cases of abductions on the highways, schools and places of worship which is a clear indication that kidnapping is gradually becoming a lucrative business model for criminal elements. Even more disturbing is the fact that kidnapping is being used as a distraction to mask other chains of criminality including illegal mining, organ harvesting, ritualism, cannibalism, skull mining, etc. For instance, it has been established from the account of freed victims that some

kidnappers harvest and sell the organs of victims whose families could not afford to pay the ransom, to ritualists. While commending the concerted efforts and ongoing joint operations of the security services, we hereby urge the Federal Government to adopt a multi-faceted approach to combat this odious kidnapping epidemic. Firstly, we recommend significant investment in technology to enhance intelligence gathering and preempt kidnappings. This includes deploying advanced surveillance systems in high-risk areas and integrating tech solutions into the national security framework. Secondly, we suggest greater responsibility and accountability from the security forces. We suggest that henceforth, Divisional Police Officers (DPOs) and other related Unit Commanders of security service should be held directly responsible for incidences of kidnapping in their respective areas of responsibility. This measure would incentivize local law enforcement to take proactive steps that will prevent such incidents, rather than merely reacting to them after the fact. More importantly, security forces must justify the huge expenses by government in the security sector by producing visible results in their fight against insecurity.

Furthermore, we would like to once again stress the importance of addressing the underlying socio-economic factors that contribute to the kidnapping crisis and indeed other insecurity plaguing the country. This include implementing economic empowerment programs in vulnerable communities, as well as improving access to education and healthcare, to reduce the appeal of criminal activities among the youth. We join well meaning citizens of this country to root for a coordinated national response to the kidnapping crisis. This involves not only strengthening the capacity of security agencies and deepening synergy between and among them but also fostering greater collaboration between federal, state, and local governments, to able to get on top of the situation. The Government should take swift and decisive action to reverse the current trend and restore peace, security and stability across the regions. We also call on the international community to support Nigeria's efforts to combat kidnapping and other violent crimes. Time is of the essence. The government must act now to prevent an impending national crisis. A stitch in time will not just save nine but an entire nation.