

30th May 2026

**Paediatric Association of Nigeria (PAN)
Public Statement on the Trend of Abduction and Incarceration of Nigerian Children**

As child advocates, the Paediatric Association of Nigeria (PAN) naturally seizes every opportunity to celebrate children and plead their cases. Every 27th May, the nation celebrates children to show them affection and remind all stakeholders of our joint commitment to the wellbeing of Nigerian children. This year, we celebrated with huge pain in our hearts, as some 39 children, some of them infants and toddlers, were abducted along with some teachers, from schools in Oriire LGA, Oyo State, on the 15th May 2026.

We are aware that child abduction has previously occurred in many parts of the country with hundreds still missing or presumed dead. It is on record that PAN has frequently lent its voice to calls to address the security challenges in the land. It is a lot more worrisome that the Oyo State incident took place in a school, that which is ordinarily regarded as a place of sanctuary for children. Abduction is a gross violation of the rights of these children to freedom, family life, education, play and recreation and good nutrition, as enshrined in the Child Rights Law. It is also a threat to the various efforts targeted at reducing the huge population of out-of-school children that Nigeria is known for. Hence, the recent celebration of Children's Day in the country was marred by the horror presented by the fact that some children were being held hostage in a forest.

Our association wishes to emphasise that every Nigerian child, irrespective of class or creed, ethnicity or religion, deserves access to safe shelter and clothing, good nutrition, education, a safe and secure home, school and environment and freedom to play and enjoy recreation without fear of harm. Unfortunately, a child held in captivity loses all these rights. For this, the Paediatric Association of Nigeria wishes to put on record, the grave consequences of child abduction, including the risk of death from injuries, infections, and lack of access to basic care, the risk of emotional and psychological damage and the effects of interruption of education. Further, child abduction may lead to other social problems such as child trafficking, sex slavery, child soldiering, child marriage and involvement in drug trades. Beyond the affected child, the parents, the family unit, and the larger society may also be adversely affected.

Confronted with this grave situation, PAN calls on the government at all levels to urgently deploy all resources, including all the relevant security agencies, to rescue the children being held hostage in Oyo State forests. In addition, we appeal for the prioritization of the safety and security of children, within and outside schools in Nigeria. PAN is also calling for the rejuvenation of the Safe School Initiative as a nationwide project to make school environments less prone to invasion.

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CALL TO ACTION:

Today, the Paediatric Association of Nigeria demands immediate action. While PAN commiserates with the family of the departed teacher, we also strongly appeal to the government at all levels to secure the release of the abducted children and the remaining teachers within the shortest possible time before more irreparable damage is done to their well-being and psyche

Sincerely,

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