

Media Leaks Name of Pastor Negotiating With Boko Haram

Despite disappointment that word of his involvement in the negotiations for the release of the Chibok schoolgirls was leaked to media last week, the Australian cleric appointed as the Nigerian President's envoy in the negotiations with Boko Haram remains hopeful that they will succeed in getting the girls released.

Dr. Stephen Davis, an Anglican cleric, told media the fact that his name was leaked is not helping the negotiations, but he remains confident nonetheless that they will succeed.

News of his involvement broke late last week just as a new video showing some of the approximately 200 girls Boko Haram has taken captive from a school in Chibok, Borno state, in mid-April surfaced. British Newspaper, Daily Mail, and others reported that the video which has not been released to the public was taken on May 19 by Nigerian journalist Ahmad Salkida to prove that the girls are still alive.

The video is said to show hijab-wearing girls one-by-one walking up to a spot in front of a white sheet set up between the trees to speak into the camera. Four stated in Hausa that they were taken by force and they were hungry. A girl estimated to be about 18 apparently said tearfully, "My family will be so worried." Another said in a soft voice, "I never expected to suffer like this in my life."

The Daily Mail reports that the girls look healthy but that it is understood that several pupils are ill. One appears to have a broken wrist. "In the video, eight girls—dressed in their home-made school uniforms of pale blue gingham—plead for release as they stand courageously in front of the camera. They are clearly scared, upset, and trying to be brave," the

news report read.

President Goodluck Jonathan, who has come under increasing pressure for his handling of the crisis, is said to have seen the video. Media reported on Monday that the Australian Anglican cleric, Dr. Stephen Davis, has quietly been working behind the scenes as the president's envoy in the negotiation with Boko Haram for more than a month. He is working in conjunction with Aisha Wakil, a Muslim convert with known connections to Boko Haram who is trusted by senior commanders. Davis has undertaken numerous trips to volatile locations in northern Nigeria for face-to-face meetings with Boko Haram commanders.

"The vast majority of the Chibok girls are not being held in Nigeria. They are in camps across the Nigerian border in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. I say the 'vast majority' as I know a small group was confirmed to me to be in Nigeria last week when we sought to have them released," Davis told British Channel 4 on Monday.

Davis said in his telephone interview from an undisclosed location the fact that his involvement had been leaked to the media last week was not helpful to the negotiations. "Despite this, every indication is positive. But as we get close to a handover, I am sure that there will be interference from some parties who do not want to see an end to the conflict in the north. That will be the most difficult time."

Davis told Channel 4 his team had "come within a whisker" of brokering a release three times within the past month, only to have each handover ruined at the last moment. He, and others Channel 4 had spoken to, allege that powerful figures with "vested interests" have sought to sabotage a deal.

On Tuesday, reports surfaced in the Nigerian media that 10 generals and five other senior military officers had been accused of helping Boko Haram. According to the reports, the

officers had faced a court-martial and had been found guilty of supplying arms and information to the group. However, Nigerian army spokesman Major General Chris Olukolade categorically denied the reports.

Meanwhile, it is reported that Boko Haram has killed dozens of people in fresh attacks in Borno State over the weekend. According to the BBC, attackers ordered Christians in Attagara village near the Cameroon border into a church compound before opening fire on them. Witnesses said they thought the attackers were Nigerian military. Several other villages suffered similar attacks.

Open Doors continues to monitor the situation in Chibok and in northern Nigeria. The organization has received hundreds of prayer messages from supporters around the world for the parents of the abducted girls. More deliveries will be made soon.

To send a blog or prayer note to the families, click [here](#) or [here](#).

In a report released by the Open Doors research team on Tuesday, Nigeria is the No. 1 country on the World Watch Top 10 Violence List and also has had more martyrs (2,073) than any other nation between Nov. 1, 2012, and March 31, 2014.

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