IDPs camps: Borno police deploys female police to camps

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IDPs camps: Borno police deploys female police to camps  
  
…NEMA/SEMA questions veracity of allegation  
  
Following allegations of sexual assault on female IDPs in Maiduguri at IDPs camps, Borno State Police command has set up an eight man committee headed by an Assistant Commissioner of Police CID in the State to carryout investigations into any unscrupulous activities of any camp officials relating to sexual assault and other forms of molestation at the camp.  
  
The State Police Commissioner Damian Chukwu who spoke exclusively with The Nation in Maiduguri also informed that he has ordered the withdrawal of all male police personal operating inside the camps and replaced them with their female colleagues for the internal security of the IDPs in all the camps in the metropolis.  
  
According to the him, the objective of his plan is to forestall any reports of security operatives molesting the female IDPs at the camps, adding that, “the measure will equally allow the women to open up to their female counterpart on any form of molestation that they could have been experiencing in the camps over the years”.  
  
CP Chukwu however regretted that the women are not cooperating with the committee that he has set up to investigate the cases of abuse in the camps.  
  
“I have set up an eight man committee headed by an Assistant Commissioner of Police CID with two senior female officers. Since that time, they have started some investigation. The personal police in the camps have been changed to women only but response of the women is not encouraging at all. We even have reports of those abuses taken place within the camps.  
  
“Initially, we had men. I had to send out the men and bring in the women into the camps. The whole idea is that going by the culture of the people; they will feel freer to talk to the women when they have cases of sexual abuse. I believe that with women, they will feel free to complain about anything that has happened to them.  
  
“With the new arrangement, the women police do the internal security coverage of the camps while the men do the external and territorial coverage of the camps in Maiduguri. The panel is using these women in the camps to interview women in the camps for the things that have happened to them in the past like last year or even last month or three, six months ago. Again with women in the camp, that tendencies of what they say was happening will no longer be there because women cannot assault women sexually so we have moved the men away from inside the camp. I must say that the police took these measures not because the police are culprit but because we want to sanitize the system.  
  
“As a matter of fact, since I came here three months ago, I have not received any of such allegations but even the ones that we have received are on mutual ground. I must also say that some of these allegations that are being taunted don’t even happen in the camps if at all they exist because the women go outside the camps to meet people and no one has control over them when they are outside the camps,” CP Chukwu explained.  
  
Also speaking on the issue, the North East Zonal Coordinator of National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) Alhaji Mohammed Kannar informed that both NEMA and Borno State Government have never received any official complain of sexual assault as alleged by the Human Right Watch.  
  
Alhaji Kannar explained that out of the 50 humanitarian partners working at the IDPs camps in the state, 30 of them are working tirelessly to see that the rights of the IDPs are protected to the latter.  
  
He said; “We have about five or six sectors that are working. We have education, health, food and security, protection, wash, and psycho-social. All these sectors are working round the clock to make the camps and the host communities safe. In case of sexual violence or abuse, the protection sector works hard to see that issues of such harassment are being taken care of.  
  
“Actually, when we heard the allegations, the sectors responsible is trying to find out what really happened because, we have not received any official report from any IDP or group of individuals at the camp but that does not mean that these things don’t happen because sexual issues is an issue that has to be carefully handled. An individual maybe sexually harassed but he may not come out to report to the appropriate authorities to take care of the matter. However, one cannot run away from that fact.  
  
“What we are saying is that we did not receive any report of any kind from such anybody in the camp. We are working with 50 humanitarian partners. Out of that number, 30 are working on that sector to see IDPs are being protected. When we receive allegation like this, we refer them to Federation of Women Lawyers, Human Right Commission, Police and other NGOs that have experts in this sector and these people ensure that the right of such individual is protected.  
  
“There are so many issues but some have to be settled within the camps. We have our level of settling them at the community levels considering where they come from. One has to consider that these people come from villages and communities and they have certain practices among them. When these kinds of things arise among them, we follow the traditional institutions within their communities to resolve such case. However, we have not had any case of direct harassment by any camp official. It’s unfortunate that We had a similar allegation some time ago and a committee was set up but nothing was discovered and the same thing is happening again. I am sure that world will know the truth by the time the Presidential Committee on the investigation of this matter is finally out and presented to the president,” Kannar said.  
  
The Chairman Borno state Emergency Management Agency, Engr. Satomi Ahemed questioned the authenticity of the allegation from the human right watch on abuse of female IDPs.  
  
He challenged the agency to come clean with the facts, stressing that those allegation are untrue and if at all they exit, they did not happen at any IDP camp in Borno State.  
  
Meanwhile, Borno State Governor Kashim Shettima has earlier reveal plans to enlist the services of undercover female police officers, Department of State Security and the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons,(NAPTIP) the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) to uncover the veracity of report of sexual abuse on women in IDPs’ camps in the state.  
  
Gov. Shettima who spoke in Maiduguri while receiving a delegation from the National University Commission on tour of ongoing infrastructure at the proposed Borno State University held at the Government House in Maiduguri expressed his concern over the report.  
  
His words: ‎”Today, as Governor of Borno State, there is no issue that gives me headache like the unfortunate bye-products of IDP camps. Our citizens were violently sent out of their houses and communities, it is their fundamental rights to be provided alternative accommodation with their food and health cater for. Sadly and very sadly indeed, the IDP camps have become avenues that horrible stories of sexual slavery, prostitution rings, drug peddling and other social vices are emanating from.  
  
“Only yesterday (Monday) there was a report by a Human Rights group alleging incidences of sexual abuses by some Federal and State workers in some of the IDP camps. This is highly condemnable. Apart from investigating these claims and arresting culprits which is absolutely necessary, I am going to write letters to the Inspector General of Police, the Director General of the DSS, the National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency and may be the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, requesting all of them to deploy female and male undercover detectives to all our camps to permanently spy on anyone involved in sexual harassment, any form of prostitution, drugs trafficking, possible child trafficking and even the allegations of diversion of food items meant for IDP’s.  
  
“I would want these detectives to report their findings to their security establishments and whoever is found wanting should be picked up without notifying me so long as there is verifiable evidence to prosecute him or her,” Shettima said.  
  
Gov. Shettima who also appreciates that the present condition of the displaced people especially women can lead them to indulging in illicit activities however vowed that sanity must be injected in the system despite the circumstances.  
  
He said: “ Ladies and gentlemen, I am tired of applying the element of persuasion in handling the issues of IDP’s, we need to wield the big stick. The problem with managing the IDP camp is that you are dealing with a population of two or more local government areas in one location and you cannot imprison them by restricting or stopping them from leaving the IDP camp in the day time.  
  
“When a female IDP leaves the camp in the morning, you cannot be in control of where she goes and who she sees. If she leaves the camp and returns the following day, she may claim to have visited a family member and little can be done. I strongly believe there are cases of sexual harassment but some of the women may be consenting to sexual advances largely due to extreme poverty and loss of value system.  
  
“We have to instill sanity into the IDP camps and I hope we will not end up having human rights activists telling us we cannot deploy undercover detectives into IDP camps due to one form of rights violation or the other. Desperate situations call for desperate measures. Sexual harassment of female IDPs is a desperate situation.  
  
“None of us here is beyond becoming an IDP if Allah decrees and none of us would fold arms if his or her daughter is in position to be sexually harassed, so we must act now” , Gov. Shettima vows  
  
Shettima regretted how Boko Haram has painted Borno negatively as oppose to the peaceful nature of the people.  
  
“The Borno Story that has been painted very badly by the Boko Haram. We are even tired of counting the number of deaths, number of those of injured, value of private institutions and private property destroyed and the huge number of persons internally displaced”, the Governor said.