

Small Comfort as Parents See Daughters in Video

From Page A1

missing, are now bargaining chips for Boko Haram, which is demanding that the Nigerian government release its imprisoned members in exchange for the kidnapped students.

But while much of the world saw the girls sitting passively and compliant in the video, many of their families had to wait. One parent explained that there was no electricity in their village to enable them to watch, a poignant reminder of how poor many victims in the conflict here often are.

By the end of Tuesday, 77 faces in the solemn crowd of girls, newly clad from head to toe in somber black-and-gray robes, had been recognized, the state governor's office said in a statement. The robes, revealing only the schoolgirls' faces, rendered some of them difficult to identify, some parents said.

The government had arranged a first showing of the video in Chibok on Monday to identify the girls, but it had to be halted abruptly when the parents became overcome with grief, demanding that the government's identification process be moved here to Maiduguri.

"The families became upset and they started crying 'this is my child,'" a senior state official said Tuesday evening. "They started shouting. They had to stop the filming."

Then on Tuesday, the state government organized a group of about 15 parents, relatives and girls who had escaped the Islamists to make the arduous journey to the state capital here to watch the video. They were guarded by rifle-bearing militia members from the village in red uniforms because the road is still preyed on by Boko Haram.

The group, along with teachers, officials and security operatives, packed into the room at the government complex and locked the door. When the parents emerged, their universe of anxiety had shifted. Some appeared dazed and perturbed as they slumped in plastic chairs on the grounds of the state-run hotel here.

"She's not feeling O.K.," said Lawan Zannah, who had just seen his daughter Ayesha, 18, in the video. "The way she is sitting. She doesn't even know where she is. She seemed sad. Sad."

The girls had come to the Chibok Government Girls Secondary School to take their final exams, and many were staying overnight there. Armed and uniformed men rounded them up, loaded them into trucks and drove off with them. Although about 50 escaped, not a single one of the remaining girls has been found.

Ms. Yaga conveyed the shock, four weeks later, of going to fetch her daughter and not finding her there.

"My daughter was living in the school," she said. "When I went in the morning to see her, she wasn't there."

The video may have provided some relief to the parents, but on Tuesday there were no indications that the girls were any closer to being located. The Islamists are likely to be holding them in a vast forest of low trees and scrub that abuts Chibok, but so far Nigerian military efforts have been unsuccessful.

Boko Haram has conducted large-scale attacks on government and civilian targets, including schools, and the Nigerian government has waged a bloody counterinsurgency against the group, detaining and killing hundreds of suspects and civilians.

But statements from the Nigerian government suggested that officials might be open to negotiations, while senior American military and civilian officials arrived in the national capital, Abuja, for talks with the government.

Gen. David M. Rodriguez, commanding general of the American military's Africa Command, visited Nigeria on Monday and Tuesday to discuss assistance for the search, including surveillance aircraft and satellite imagery, as well as broader security cooperation with Nigerian officials, a Pentagon spokesman, Lt. Col. Myles B. Caggins III, said Tuesday.

"It's certain General Rodriguez reassured the Nigerians that the U.S. is committed to supporting their efforts to find the kidnapped schoolgirls," Colonel Caggins said.

The general arrived Monday on a previously scheduled visit for talks with his Nigerian counterparts that also included senior American policy makers and diplomats, including Sarah Sewall, the undersecretary of state for civilian security, democracy and human rights, Colonel Caggins said.

The international effort, expanding last weekend as the plight of the girls captured the global imagination, appeared to be of some comfort to the parents who came here Tuesday.

Yet uncertainty and longing prevailed. "I just want my daughter to be back," Mr. Wattai said.



Relatives of the Nigerian girls kidnapped last month arrived on Tuesday in Maiduguri to view a video released by the abductors.

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