

## Two *Al-Jazeera* journalists detained in NE Nigeria

Nigeria's military has detained two *Al-Jazeera* television journalists in the country's northeast, where troops have been battling Boko Haram militants.



Defence spokesman Chris Olukolade said the pair were "found to have been loitering around areas where military operations are ongoing in the northeast and have been restrained in Maiduguri".

The statement, posted on Twitter and the military's website on Wednesday, identified the journalists as Ahmed Idris and Mustafa Andy.

They were "noted to have been moving around various locations including restricted areas in Yobe and Borno state (and) were also operating without any protection, accreditation or due clearance".

*Al-Jazeera* said on its website that Idris, a reporter, and Andy, a producer, had been "officially detained until further notice" since Tuesday and called for their immediate release.

"They have all the relevant paperwork to report on the Nigerian elections (this Saturday) and stories related to the election," the broadcaster said. "Both men had just finished filming a story on the military with their cooperation. They were not 'loitering' but were in the hotel room and had only passed through the restricted areas of Yobe and Borno State to get to Maiduguri."

*Al-Jazeera* said camera equipment belonging to the men, who are both Nigerian nationals, was confiscated. Nigeria's military has had tense relations with the media, particularly overseas organisations, frequently accusing them of misrepresenting the conflict.

The government has also been accused of restricting visas for foreign journalists to cover this Saturday's general election. Idris recently reported for *Al-Jazeera*'s English service from Chibok, in Borno state, from where more than 200 schoolgirls were kidnapped by Boko Haram in April last year.

The government-organised trip saw Finance Minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala lay the foundation stone of a new school to replace the one destroyed in the attack. He also interviewed military commanders involved in the operations against Boko Haram, which have gathered pace since February and led to a number of claimed successes.

Olukolade said the journalists had been "monitored by military intelligence operatives" until they reached the Borno state capital. "This followed the increasing suspicion that their activities were aimed at interfering with the ongoing military operations in the area," he added. "The motive, activities and some material in possession of these individuals are now being investigated."