



May 9, 2014

His Excellence Dr. John W. Ashe
President of the United Nations General Assembly
Secretariat of the United Nations
New York, New York

RE: Abduction of Nigerian Schoolgirls

Dear Mr President,

As NGOs accredited to the United Nations, we add our voices to the growing number of those who seek the safe return of the hundreds of girls and boys who have been abducted by Boko Haram. It is deeply troubling to hear the leaders of Boko Haram refer to the girls as “slaves” and declare that it plans to sell them “in the market” and “marry them off”.

We want to underscore the need to protect children, and we align ourselves with the joint statement of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, UN Women and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights which stated, inter alia, that “Attacks against the liberty of children and the targeting of schools are prohibited under international law and cannot be justified under any circumstances.”

As more and more disturbing reports are received, and fear increases that great harm is being perpetrated against the abducted girls the OHCHR has emphatically stated: “[We] warn the perpetrators that there is an absolute prohibition against slavery and sexual slavery in international law. These can, under certain circumstances, constitute crimes against humanity.”

It is also important to recall that since 2009 when it took violent dimension to its alleged crusade to cleanse the region of western influences, particularly educational facilities, the group has unleashed untold destruction in lives and properties in Nigeria. It remains a great threat to the stability and development of the country, especially as Nigerian prepare to go to the poll next year.

We appreciate the UN Secretary General's pledge of a UN high-level envoy to Nigeria to support the government's effort in dealing with the situation. We recognize the commitment of the governments of various countries that have offered to assist Nigerian authorities in this regard. However these commitments and relevant efforts, without pretext of indefinite presence or any form of occupation, must not stop until the mission is achieved.

Believing that this present incident touches on all issues of development and human rights, especially of the girl child, we request if you could place it on the agenda of the on-going General Assembly's discussions on development and to see that the following actions are taken:

- Mobilization national and international resources to locate and release the girls who have been abducted.
- Intense collaboration from Nigeria's neighboring countries in this campaign.
- Provision of the released captive girls with the necessary psychological and material assistance they may need to recover from their experience.
- Bringing of the perpetrators of this crime to justice.
- Implementation of safeguards to prevent future abductions.
- Comprehensive response to and eradication of the Boko Haram insurgency.

We are available for any advocacy with which we might help do.

Attached with this letter is factsheet of the Boko Haram attacks on Nigerian schoolchildren since between 2013 and 2014.

Respectfully yours,

Prepared and sponsored by

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