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Human Rights Now

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Secretary General, Kazuko Ito

For Immediate release

The Abduction of More Than 200 School Girls in Nigeria

According to the media report, on April 14th, 2014, more than 200 girls from a dormitory of a girls' boarding school in the northern town of Chibouk in Nigeria were abducted by an armed group. On May 5th, the leader of Nigeria's militant Islamist group Boko Haram¹ claimed responsibility for the abduction and stated that they were going to sell the abducted girls *insha Allah*, or God willing. Boko Haram, meaning "western education is sin", is a terrorist group receiving training from al Qaeda affiliates. They claimed that the purpose of the abduction is to hamper western education in Nigeria.²

The report stated that although some girls succeeded in escaping, most of them remain restrained. According to UNICEF, on the evening of May 4th, an armed group seemingly organized by Boko Haram attacked a north-eastern village, and abducted at least eight girls between ages twelve and fifteen.³

Human Rights Now (HRN), a Tokyo-based international human rights organization, strongly protests the human rights violating action of abducting girls who were receiving needed education. Under no circumstance should terrorism which hold children as hostages be accepted.

Abduction, enslavement, and human trafficking are serious crimes which violate international law. Furthermore, it is highly possible that the act of kidnapping girls under the premise that they are receiving education, falls under the category of crime against humanity.⁴

The right for girls to access education is guaranteed by international law, namely the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention of the Rights of the Child, and International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

It should never be tolerated that children, especially girls who tend to be in socially weaker positions, be sanctioned for receiving an education. The right to education should not be abridged by violence, intimidation, or crime. HRN calls the group claiming responsibility to release the girls immediately to their families.

¹ According to the report, it was Abubakar Shekau.

² <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/05/05/world/africa/nigeria-abducted-girls/>

³ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47733#.U2sjHKmCjSc> In May 6 2014, Rupert Colville, the spokesman for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, said in a briefing in Geneva. "[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."

⁴ Ibid.

At the same time, HRN asks the Nigerian government to take their responsibility to protect the girls' rights to safety, life, as well as education. The Nigerian government should also provide additional protection to schools and colleges at risk of attack and take measures to mitigate the impact of attacks on children's right to education.

Finally, HRN asks the international community including the UN to contribute more so that children's right to grow and develop are not abridged by violence, intimidation, or conflict. HRN asks to ensure that schools remain sanctuaries where all students can learn in a safe environment.

Human Rights Now ~Protecting Human Rights for All~

Human Rights Now is a Tokyo based international human rights NGO comprising a body of experienced legal professionals dedicated to protecting and promoting human rights around the world, with a special focus on Asia. The activity includes monitoring/ fact-finding of human rights, human rights education and advocacy work. Human Rights Now has special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since August 2012.

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