

We who believe in freedom, cannot rest until it comes... #SaveOurDaughters #SaveOurGirls

## BACKGROUND

More than 200 girls were abducted from a school in Chibok, Nigeria. The girls were taken at gunpoint and have disappeared without a trace. Last week, school principal Asabe Kwambura told the Associated Press that 43 students had been accounted for, but 230 were still missing.

While a small percentage of girls have escaped (about 40); new reports have surfaced indicating more girls have been abducted and the number of girls missing is nearly 300. The girls that have escaped report that they were raped multiple times throughout the day as an act of terror.

To further exasperate the matter; demonstrators in support of the missing girls in Nigeria have been arrested and accused of being non-cooperative with the Nigerian government. The girls have been missing for more than two weeks and the first report by the President of Nigeria has only come Sunday, May 04.

Activism and protest via social media has heightened awareness on this issue; but reports claim the girls have been smuggled across borders into neighboring countries and sold for so-called bride fees for \$12.00.

The outrage on this issue still does not capture the depth of the situation that is not new in this region as more than two dozen Nigerian boy students were murdered in February and acts of such violence (rape and murder) has been ongoing for years.

The challenge for the Nigerian government is not solely to bring the girls back and this is a critical action that must occur right now; but also to work with peace and human rights advocates to establish a stable infrastructure that will protect students and the communities from future acts of terror.

## PRAYER

Prayer is a critical tool of action. Consider including a time of silence and reflection; devotion; or dedicated time in worship services for community prayer, testimonies or vigilance on this issue. Consider ecumenical and interfaith measures of support to demonstrate unified efforts. Pray without ceasing in your tradition or practice.

### *Sample Prayers:*

God of All Creation, we call upon You to act on behalf of your people who cry out in agony at the abduction of young girls and the murder of young boys. We lament our fears and sorrows unto you with hope and trust in your power, strength, love, mercy and grace. God, help us. Help our children. God, save us. Save our children. Hear our prayers and have mercy on us. Amen.

Lord, not a minute or an hour. We need you now. Give us strength to be vessels of justice, liberation and peace. All things are possible with you. You cannot fail. Amen.

*Resources for Prayer:* <http://www.iwj.org/resources/prayer-litany-justice>

(Downloadable Resources for Prayer via Interfaith Worker Justice)

## DANGERS

The longer the girls are missing, the longer they are at risk and exposed to sexual violence, psychological oppression and death. Let's work together to return these daughters to the arms of their families and communities. And further, let us take a stand so such acts of violence will not continue. These girls are sacred and we cannot remain silent. We must find them, return them home and bring charges against the abductors and anyone linked to their suffering. It has been reported that the girls are being raped multiple times throughout the day. [SIGN PETITION.](#)

One of the abducted girls who managed to escape made these shocking revelations:

- According to Daily Mirror, “Families of the schoolgirls, aged between 15 to 18, are certain their daughters are now being used as sex slaves by an extreme sect that has killed 1,500 people since the start of this year alone. They are captives in the wild Sambisa Forest in north-east Nigeria where Boko Haram has a heavily armed camp of bunkers, tunnels, ramshackle buildings and tents.
- “One girl who recently escaped following an earlier kidnapping said she was prized as a terror leader’s wife because she had been a virgin. She said young female captives were raped up to 15 times a day...”
- See more at: <http://gist-arena.blogspot.in/2014/05/girl-who-escaped-opens-up-boko-haram.html#sthash.iPa1JwQT.oZoQ3WkI.dpuf>

## ACTION

- Sign the petition which will be delivered to the US President of the United States; the President of Nigeria; the US Nigerian Embassy and representatives of congress. Sign the petition and share with others: <http://chn.ge/1n6DIYo>.
- Contact your legislators. See section *Legislative Now* for more details.
- Talk about what is happening daily. Post updates on social media (articles, photos, information on demonstrations and your own personal reflections to keep this story trending, current and in the public eye.
- Wear your gele, head wrap or head covering in support of the girls of Nigeria. On Sunday, May 04, many groups organized for a “Save Our Girls” rally across the country in Pennsylvania, New York, Washington, DC and beyond. Participants were asked to wear their gele/headwraps as an act of solidarity. We invite you to continue this observance or silent protest which could be exercised by all. Congregations are encouraged to host a day or weekend to host a rally in this way. Sign petition: <http://chn.ge/1n6DIYo>.
- As you host vigilance, please contact your media outlets to inform them of your participation and invite them to cover your action. Be prepared for media presence: create a press release; have a list of your organizational goals and call for action on this issue; provide an explanation for your action; and provide a point of contact for follow-up and questions on the demonstration and next steps. Sign the petition: <http://chn.ge/1n6DIYo>.

## RESOURCES

You can learn more about the kidnappings in these articles in the NY Times at <http://nyti.ms/1rSD7eZ> or in the New Yorker at <http://nyr.kr/1mZgi9F>.

While this kidnapping is shocking in its scale, the kidnapping and trafficking of girls and women is a tremendous global problem and such acts of terror is not new to this region with more than two dozen young boys murdered and an ongoing threat to abduct students from schools across the country.

The U.S. State Department estimates that between 600,000 and 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders each year and 80% of those trafficked are women and girls, mostly for sexual exploitation.

To learn more about this problem, we highly recommend "**Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide**" at <http://www.amightygirl.com/half-the-sky> and the accompanying documentary, for ages 13 and up, at <http://www.amightygirl.com/half-the-sky-documentary>. The excellent film, "**Girl Rising**" also explores the challenges faced by many girls in developing countries at <http://www.amightygirl.com/girl-rising>.

Pray. A moment of silence; devotion; inclusion in worship services and community prayer is needed and supplements the work. Pray without ceasing in your tradition or practice.

*Sources: Youth for the Ecumenical Movement; New York Times, The Daily Mirror.*

## LEGISLATION NOW

Contact your congressional representatives: <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>.

- Call, email, write and visit your congressional leadership in the House and Senate expressing your concerns and outline calls for action to seek, find and return the abducted school girls of Nigeria.
- Urge your representative to support Senate resolution 433 “condemning the abduction of female students by armed militants from the government girls secondary school in the northeastern province of Borno in the Federal Republic of Nigeria.”

*Link to Senate Resolution 433--*

<http://beta.congress.gov/congressional-record/2014/05/01/senate-section/article/S2621-1>

- Invite legislator to support our petition: <http://chn.ge/1n6DIYo>.
- Impress upon our congressional leadership the urgency to work with Nigerian government for reform, safety and preventive measures to protect the innocent children (girls and boys) from such acts of terror.
- Remind the representatives that in addition to the abduction of the girls, young school boys have been murdered.
- Remind the leadership of the US great history in standing on the side of justice, human rights and against terror. The basic human rights and dignity of all children, communities and people should be protected. Intervention should be taken with a great urgency of now.
- Create a team or ministry to remain vigilant daily with legislators.

## TALKING POINTS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP:

- I'm a constituent, and I condemn the abduction of female students by armed militants in the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- We want government troops on the ground to find and return the school girls and a long term plan of action to support the Nigerian government with establishing preventive measures so these acts of terror will stop and not reoccur.
- The United States has a history of standing on the side of justice, and taking action in the globe when oppression occurs.
- All children matter. All people matter.
- These girls are at risk of sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, psychological trauma, depression, and isolation from their communities due to shame.
- As a nation, we have been silent while young girls are being terrorized with abduction, rape and murder.
- We urge you to not remain silent, but to join the efforts to return these girls to their families and communities.
- We urge congressional support of Senate Resolution 433 as it denounces these abductions and calls for a plan of action to protect the human rights of these innocent young children.
- I want my representative to commit to joining this time sensitive effort to save lives and bring these girls home.

## TESTIMONY

*"My daughter was abducted on her way to school in 1977. About a week or so later my 15 year old child's burned body was found stuffed in a garbage can in an alley. Yes, I identify with the hurt and suffering of these parents, communities and classmates. That was 1977, but in 2014, the pain is still with me!"* (Beverly Bradley Duncan, California, Petition Signer)

According to Daily Mirror, "Families of the schoolgirls, aged between 15 to 18, are certain their daughters are now being used as sex slaves by an extreme sect that has killed 1,500 people since the start of this year alone. They are captives in the wild Sambisa Forest in north-east Nigeria where Boko Haram has a heavily armed camp of bunkers, tunnels, ramshackle buildings and tents.

- "One girl who recently escaped following an earlier kidnapping said she was prized as a terror leader's wife because she had been a virgin. She said young female captives were raped up to 15 times a day..."

## SOLIDARITY

Sign the petition. <http://chn.ge/1n6DIYo>.

Forward and encourage your network to sign the petition. <http://chn.ge/1n6DIYo>.

Use the following hashtags: #BringBackOurDaughters #BringBackOurGirls

Contact your legislative leadership: email, write, call, visit.

Contact the White House: email, write, call.

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Poetry

Restless  
Unable to complete already unfocused prayers  
Where are you sisters  
I ponder  
I want to run across the waters to find you  
Can't sleep hoping breaking news will break...in  
Do you sleep  
Or are you restless, too  
Unable to complete already unfocused prayers  
Then dream little sister  
With eyes wide awake, rebuking the night  
We cannot rest  
Until..  
We find you  
Until...  
Freedom comes, for...  
All  
Our sisters...  
Girls...  
Daughters...  
& Sons.  
We are running across the waters  
We are running...  
To you.  
To love.

### Prayer & Interfaith Resources

<http://www.iwj.org/resources/prayer-litany-justice>  
(Source: Interfaith Worker Justice)

### Networks

United Church of Christ Ministry for Youth  
[www.ucc.org/youth](http://www.ucc.org/youth)

Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc.  
<http://www.sdpconference.info/>

**Contact:** Rev. Waltrina N. Middleton, United Church of Christ  
*National Minister for Youth Advocacy and Leadership Formation*  
Office 216-736-3871  
Cell 773-273-9254  
Email [middletonw@ucc.org](mailto:middletonw@ucc.org)