

2013-J5113

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION condemning the abduction of female students by armed militants from the Government Girls Secondary School in the north-eastern province of Borno in the Federal Republic of Nigeria

WHEREAS, On the night of April 14, 2014, as many as 234 female students, most of them between 16 and 18 years old, were abducted by armed militants from the Government Girls Secondary School, a boarding school located in the northeastern province of Borno in the Federal Republic of Nigeria; and

WHEREAS, The militants burned down several buildings before opening fire on soldiers and police who were guarding the school; they then forced the students into trucks; and

WHEREAS, According to local officials in Borno state, approximately 43 students were able to flee their captors, unfortunately, the rest remain missing; and

WHEREAS, All public secondary schools in Borno state were closed in March 2014 due to the increasing attacks in the past year which have killed hundreds of students, but the young women at the Government Girls Secondary School were recalled to take their final exams; and

WHEREAS, The group popularly known as "Boko Haram", which loosely translates from the Hausa language to "Western education is sin", is known to oppose the education of girls, and has kidnapped girls in the past to use as cooks and sex slaves; Boko Haram is thought to be responsible for the April 14th kidnapping in Borno state; and

WHEREAS, There are reports that the abducted girls have been sold as brides to Islamist militants for the equivalent of \$12 each; and

WHEREAS, Boko Haram has targeted schools, mosques, churches, villages, and agricultural centers, as well as government facilities in an armed campaign to create an Islamic state in northern Nigeria, prompting the

president of Nigeria to declare a state of emergency in May of 2013 in three of the country's northeastern states; and

WHEREAS, According to the Brookings Institution, Boko Haram burned down or destroyed 50 schools and killed approximately 30 teachers in Nigeria in 2013, leaving tens of thousands of children unable to attend school; and

WHEREAS, On April 14, 2014, hours before the kidnapping in Borno state, Boko Haram bombed a bus station in Abuja, Nigeria, killing at least 75 people and wounding over 100, making it the deadliest attack ever in Nigeria's capital; and

WHEREAS, Amnesty International estimates that more than 1,500 people have been killed in attacks by Boko Haram or reprisals by Nigerian security forces this year alone, and since 2011, the Council on Foreign Relations estimates that almost 4,000 people have been killed in Boko Haram attacks; and

WHEREAS, The Department of State designated Boko Haram as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in November of 2013, recognizing the threat posed by the group's large-scale and indiscriminate attacks against women and children; and

WHEREAS, According to the United Nations, girls' education is a major challenge in Nigeria; and

WHEREAS, The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) reports some 4,700,000 children of primary school age are still not in school in Nigeria, with attendance rates lowest in the north; and

WHEREAS, A study conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) found that school children in Nigeria, particularly those in the northern provinces, are at a disad-

vantage in their education, with 37 percent of primary-age girls and 30 percent of boys in the rural northeast not attending school; and

WHEREAS, According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index, Nigeria is ranked 106 out of 136 countries based on women's

economic participation, educational attainment, and political empowerment; and

WHEREAS, As reported by the United Nations, women held only 6.7 percent of the seats in Nigeria's parliament in 2013; and

WHEREAS, The advancement of women around the world is a foreign policy priority for the United States; and

WHEREAS, The United States Agency for International Development, found broader, more equitable access to education encourages political participation, enhances governance, strengthens civil society, and promotes transparency and accountability; and

WHEREAS, A 100-country study by the World Bank shows increasing the share of women with a secondary education by 1 percent boosts annual per capita income growth by 0.3 percentage points; and

WHEREAS, According to UNICEF, adolescent girls who attend school are less likely to be married as children, are less vulnerable to disease including HIV and AIDS, and acquire information and skills which lead to increased earning power; evidence shows the return to a year of secondary education for girls correlates to a 25 percent increase in wages later in life; and

WHEREAS, The World Bank reported the benefits of women's education go beyond higher productivity for 50 percent of the population; more educated women also tend to be healthier, participate more in the formal labor market, earn more income, and provide better health care and education to their children, all of which eventually improve the well-being of all individuals and lift households out of poverty; these benefits cross generations as well as communities at large; and

WHEREAS, Women and girls must be allowed to go to school without fear of violence and unjust treatment so they can take their rightful place as equal citizens of and contributors to the world; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to expresses its strong support for the people of Nigeria, especially the

parents and families of the girls abducted by Boko Haram in Borno state, and calls for the immediate, safe return of the girls; condemns Boko Haram for its violent attacks on civilian targets, including schools, mosques, churches, villages, and agricultural centers in Nigeria; encourages the Government of Nigeria to strengthen efforts to protect

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the ability of children to obtain an education and to hold those who conduct such violent attacks accountable; encourages efforts by the United States Government to support the capacity of the Government of Nigeria to provide security for schools and to hold terrorist organizations, such as Boko Haram, accountable; urges timely civilian assistance from the United States and allied African nations in rescuing and reintegrating the abducted girls; recognizes every individual, regardless of gender, should have the opportunity to pursue an education without fear of discrimination; reaffirms its commitment to ending discrimination and violence against women and girls, to ensuring the safety and welfare of women and girls, and to pursuing policies which guarantee the basic human rights of women and girls worldwide; recognizes the empowerment of women is inextricably linked to the potential of countries to generate economic growth, sustainable democracy, and inclusive security; and encourages the Department of State, the United States Agency for International Development, and the Department of Defense to continue their support for initiatives which positively impact the ability of women and girls to fully access their human rights.