



Jubilee Campaign Commemorates Fourth Anniversary of Leah Sharibu's Captivity



On this fateful date four years ago, Islamist militant group Boko Haram ambushed Government Girls' Science and Technical College in Dapchi, Yobe State, and abducted 110 schoolgirls aged 11-19 years. One month later, with the exception of five schoolgirls who unfortunately passed away during the incident, Boko Haram released the remaining 104 students who were safely reunited with their families. However, one lone Christian girl was not included in the group of freed girls.

Then-14-year-old Leah Sharibu had bravely and repeatedly objected her captors' demands to renounce Christianity and convert to Islam; her released peers informed that Leah's unwavering devotion to her faith was the reason that Boko Haram refused to free her. Now, four years later, Leah is soon 19 years old and has had stolen from her the final years of her adolescence and the initial year of her adulthood in captivity, during which she has been forced to marry a Boko Haram commander and has given birth to two children.

Jubilee Campaign was relieved to learn in October 2021 that Leah is alive and healthy, but we remain devastated at her continued captivity on the basis of her faith and resilience. We are also further disheartened at the Nigerian government's reluctance and/or inability to rescue Leah and return her to her grieving family. In December 2021, Dr. Gloria Puldu, Executive Director of Leah Foundation, delivered a message on behalf of Leah's family:

"Thank you very much for your concern. Let me tell you how the family has agreed to spend this Christmas. They said they were tired of speaking, crying and pleading with the government of Buhari, which is deaf to every call. So it is agreed that they should remain silent and just call for continued prayers. They said they were tired of routine calls, which

hurt so much that they had to just call on anyone who wished to stand with them to do so only in prayers."

In respect to the family's wishes, we ask that today, 19 February, you keep Leah in your thoughts and prayers.

Pray That:

- *Leah and her two children are safe and healthy.*
- *Leah is released from captivity and is able to return to her family.*
- *Leah's family may find peace and strength during this difficult time.*
- *The Nigerian Government takes decisive action to rescue Leah and all other kidnapped children from Islamist militant captivity.*
- *Perpetrators are brought to justice according to the law.*

Regrettably, mass kidnappings of schoolchildren in Nigeria continue with impunity. Earlier this month, Jubilee Campaign submitted a report to the United States Department of State regarding the relationship between school abductions in Nigeria and human trafficking. Within the past year, no fewer than eleven mass kidnappings of students occurred throughout Nigeria - Zamfara, Niger, Kaduna, Benue, Kebbi, and Katsina states - and nearly 900 students have been abducted in these incidents.

In our report we raise concern that victims of kidnappings often secondarily become victims of trafficking as boys are conscripted into militant service and girls and women are forced to act as domestic servants and sexual captives. To make matters worse, Christian girls are face a specific set of challenges while in the captivity of Islamist militants, as they are forced to sleep in the wilderness, cook for the militants while only eating minuscule meals themselves, take care of the worst militant injuries - including amputations and burying the deceased - and more.



Click on the above graphic to view and download the entire submission

In the above report we also make recommendations to the Government of Nigeria in order to improve security in schools and reduce instances of mass abductions of students:

- National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) collaborate with Nigeria Police Force (NFP) and other civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to finalize the new National Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons.

- Develop alternative responses to instances t 8 of mass kidnappings that do not include paying ransoms to perpetrators, as such response incentives further criminal and terrorist activities for profit.
- Expand the capacity of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and Nigerian military forces to respond promptly and effectively to early warnings of incidents (i.e., community attacks, mass abductions) that facilitate human trafficking.
- Recognize peoples, communities, societies, and institutions that are vulnerable to instances of human trafficking or related terrorist activity, and bolster their security.

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