

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 137

BY SENATORS PETERSON, ADLEY, ALARIO, ALLAIN, AMEDEE, APPEL, BROOME, BROWN, BUFFINGTON, CHABERT, CLAITOR, CORTEZ, CROWE, DONAHUE, DORSEY-COLOMB, ERDEY, GALLOT, GUILLORY, HEITMEIER, JOHNS, KOSTELKA, LAFLEUR, LONG, MARTINY, MILLS, MORRELL, MORRISH, MURRAY, NEVERS, PEACOCK, PERRY, RISER, GARY SMITH, JOHN SMITH, TARVER, THOMPSON, WALSWORTH, WARD AND WHITE

A RESOLUTION

To condemn 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.

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 and forcing the students into trucks; and

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

WHEREAS, all public secondary schools in Borno state were closed in March 2014 because of increasing attacks in the past year that 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, has kidnapped girls in the past to use as cooks and sex slaves, and is thought to be responsible for the April 14, 2014, 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 twelve dollars 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 three of the country's northeastern states in May 2013; and

WHEREAS, according to the Brookings Institution, Boko Haram burned down or destroyed fifty schools and killed approximately thirty 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 seventy-five people and wounding over one hundred, making it the deadliest attack ever in Nigeria's capitol; 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 the Council on Foreign Relations estimates that almost 4,000 people have been killed in Boko Haram attacks since 2011; and

WHEREAS, according to the United Nations, girls' education is a major challenge in Nigeria and 4,700,000 children of primary school age are still not in school with attendance rates lowest in the north; and

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

WHEREAS, women and girls must be allowed to go to school without fear of violence and unjust treatment so that they can take their rightful place as equal citizens of and contributors to the world.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby:

(1) Express 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.

(2) Condemn Boko Haram for its violent attacks on civilian targets, including schools, mosques, churches, villages, and agricultural centers in Nigeria.

(3) Encourage the government of Nigeria to strengthen efforts to protect the ability of children to obtain an education and to hold those who conduct such violent attacks accountable.

(4) Encourage 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.

(5) Urge timely civilian assistance from the United States and allied African nations in rescuing and reintegrating the abducted girls.

(6) Recognize that every individual, regardless of gender, should have the opportunity to pursue an education without fear of discrimination.

(7) Reaffirm 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 that guarantee the basic human rights of women and girls statewide.

(9) Encourages the Department of State, the United States Agency for International Development, and the Department of Defense to continue their support for initiatives that positively impact the ability of women and girls to fully access their human rights.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the secretary of the United States Department of State, the secretary of the United States Department of Defense, and to the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE