
Open Letter to President Muhammadu Buhari to #BringBackOurGirls

Dear President Muhammadu Buhari,

As feminist, women and girls' rights, gender and social justice institutions and organizations, we wish to congratulate you on your election and recent inauguration to the highest office in Nigeria. Your election is a testament that your vision was shared by much of the electorate as they hope for a new beginning in Nigeria. We acknowledge that your priorities include ensuring safety and security for your citizens, recalling your words: *"I pledge myself and the government to the rule of law, in which none shall be so above the law that they are not subject to its dictates, and none shall be so below it that they are not availed of its protection."*

We appeal to you today to show your leadership to the world and most importantly to your Nigerian citizens by ensuring that the **hundreds of Chibok girls who are still at the mercy of Boko Haram**, one year on are immediately rescued and reunited with their families.

Your Excellency, we acknowledge the Nigerian military has done much to counter Boko Haram presence, as witnessed by the recent liberation of 800 women and girls from Sambisa forest which we celebrate. Yet, we are horrified by reports from Amnesty that since 2014, over 2,000 women and girls have been abducted. We are also extremely concerned about emerging reports indicating that the abducted Chibok girls have been **forcibly 'married', and are being used as sex slaves, human shields and suicide bombers**. The families and communities of the Chibok girls as well as countless others who have witnessed the abduction of their women and girls have lived in trauma and distress each day that their daughters have been away from home, but continue to believe, despite the time that has lapsed, that they will return.

Now that you have taken office, we urge that you:

1. Take immediate action to locate and rescue the abducted girls;
2. Provide psychosocial support services for the survivors, their families and their communities;
3. Rebuild damaged schools, ensure public spaces are safe spaces and reaffirm the girls' rights to safety, security and education as a process of restoring their dignity;

4. Prosecute those responsible for the girls' abduction and exploitation and put in place measures to hold military forces accountable for human rights violations;
5. In consultation with citizens, civil society and women's rights organizations institute measures and reforms to protect the safety and human rights of women and girls throughout Nigeria, which are further endangered by the volatile political situation in conflict areas;
6. Guarantee the safety and security of the communities who have been internally displaced, as a result of the ongoing conflict in the region.

May your tenure be one in which Boko Haram, and any other fundamentalist and extremist groups who wreak havoc, be challenged and overcome by the collective will and commitment to ensure the safety and security of every citizen – a tenure that values the lives of its girls and boys in the North as it does in the South, its rich as its poor, its majority groups as its minority groups. We look forward to an Administration under your leadership which will act, listen and respond swiftly and effectively to the needs of its citizens.

We stand ready to work with you and your administration to make sure that the demands of countless citizens, both locally and globally, for the safe return of the girls is met and that such a travesty will never be repeated.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned: