

**“BRING BACK OUR GIRLS”
Nigerian Canadian Association Rally**

Parliament Hill

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Ottawa

Today in all of Nigeria’s 36 states teachers will hold “Bring Back Our Girls” rallies and boycott schools to protest the abductions now in their sixth week.

Boko Haram is reported to have killed thousands of fellow Nigerians during its five-year violent campaign to impose its terrorist agenda across Nigeria.

A government crackdown last year led to the capture or killing of hundreds of Boko Haram, with the remainder retreating to some mountains from which they now target civilians. It has been blamed for nearly 4,000 deaths in 2014 alone. According to the US government, al Qaeda training in recent years has helped Boko Haram to intensify its attacks.



Damage to the Chibok school

During the night of April 14–15, Boko Haram attacked the Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok. They broke in, shooting the guards. A large number of students, aged 16 to 18, were taken away in trucks. The school had been closed for four weeks prior to the attack due to the security situation, but students had been called in to take final exams. The abducted students are in their final year of high school. Some appear to have escaped since, but approximately 276 are still missing.

On May 5, a video in which Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau claimed responsibility for the kidnappings emerged. Shekau claimed that "Allah instructed me to sell them...I will carry out his instructions."and " Slavery is

allowed in my religion and I shall capture people and make them slaves." He said the girls should not have been in the school and instead they should be married since girls as young as nine are suitable for marriage. Shekau admitted that many of the girls seized were not Muslims.



A truck in Nigeria promotes the #Bring Back Our Girls hash tag launched to spread awareness of the kidnapping

On May 6, Egypt's Al-Azhar mosque, one of the world's most prominent Sunni institutions of higher learning, issued a statement calling on Boko Haram to release the girls. Boko Haram's action "does not relate to the noble teachings of Islam in any way," it said. Muslim scholars, imans and intellectuals around the world have also condemned the kidnappings as criminal.

The UN Human Rights office warned that the threatened sale into slavery of the schoolgirls kidnapped might well constitute a crime against humanity. "We are deeply concerned about the outrageous claims made in a video believed to be by the leader of Boko Haram in Nigeria yesterday, in which he brazenly says he will sell the abducted schoolgirls 'in the market' and 'marry them off', referring to them as 'slaves', said its spokesman.

Dr. Pogu Chibok, leader of the Chibok Elders Forum, said, "They have been doing it for years...They have been kidnapping girls and they have been marrying them off to their members forcibly. It is just because of what happened in Chibok, that brought the phenomenon to (the) international arena, and it is now being known by everybody."



Parents weep for daughters taken
in the kidnapping

International response

The U.K. and U.S. have agreed to send experts to assist in the search. French President Francois Hollande has held a summit in Paris with Nigeria and its neighbours.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has acknowledged that Canadians have joined the international effort. Details about the extent and duration of our involvement are understandably being kept secret.

Girls' Education

Education is a critical area of empowerment for women and to enable them to make genuine choices over the kinds of lives they wish to lead. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women establish it as a basic human right. Canadians have long supported the education of both genders equally.

That women might have the chance of a healthier and happier life should be reason enough for promoting girls' education, but there are also important benefits for countries as a whole. An educated woman has the skills, information and self-confidence that she needs to be a better parent, worker and citizen.

Educated women are more productive at work - and better paid. Indeed, the dividend for educational investment is often higher for women than men. Over recent decades there has been significant progress in girls'

education. Between 1970 and 1992, combined primary and secondary enrolment for girls in developing countries rose from 38 per cent to 68 per cent.

Malala Yousafzai

Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani school girl who was shot in the head for wanting an education, offers important insights:

“Education is neither Eastern nor Western, it is human.”

“The extremists are afraid of books and pens, the power of education frightens them. They are afraid of women.”

“You must not treat others with cruelty and that much harshly, you must fight others but through peace and through dialogue and through education.’

Bring Back our Girls

The disappearance of the girls has generated concern and headlines around the world and fueled a social-media storm around the tag #bringbackourgirls – at a moment when Nigeria is preparing to host the World Economic Forum on Africa, a gathering of 900 world business leaders.



The [First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama](#), holds a sign with the #BringBackOurGirls hashtag, posted to her official [Twitter](#) account, helping to spread awareness of the kidnapping.

Conclusion

Canada needs to continue to show support for the rescue of the abducted girls.

Canadians of Muslim, Christian, Bhuddist, Jewish and no faith I've spoken to are united as one in condemning what has happened.

Boko Haram are simply brutal criminals, representing no-one but themselves.

Bring back our girls now.

Thank you.
