



November 21, 2018

**VIA OVERNIGHT DELIVERY SERVICE**

The Honorable W. Stuart Symington  
Ambassador of the United States  
to Nigeria  
U.S. Embassy in Abuja  
Plot 1075 Diplomatic Drive  
Central District Area, Abuja, Nigeria

*RE: Request that the U.S. Urge the Nigerian Government to Secure the Immediate Release of Leah Sharibu and Provide Support and Assistance to Aid Nigeria in Bringing an End to the Violence Being Carried Out Against Christians.*

Dear Mr. Ambassador,

By way of introduction, the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) is an organization dedicated to the defense of constitutional liberties secured by law. ACLJ attorneys have argued before the Supreme Court of the United States and other federal and state courts in a number of significant cases involving the freedoms of speech and religion. The ACLJ and its international affiliates – including the European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ), which is credentialed as an NGO before the United Nations – defend human rights and religious liberty around the world.

On October 19, 2018, we sent a letter to the Ambassador of Nigeria to the United States, H.E. Sylvanus Adiewere Nsofor, informing him of the threat that Boko Haram poses to Christians in Nigeria.<sup>1</sup> Additionally we urged him to take immediate action to secure the

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Jordan Sekulow, Executive Director, American Center for Law & Justice, to Sylvanus Adiewere Nsofor, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the United States (Oct. 19, 2018), available at [http://media.aclj.org/pdf/LTR-Nsofor-Nigeria-10.19.2018\\_Redacted.pdf](http://media.aclj.org/pdf/LTR-Nsofor-Nigeria-10.19.2018_Redacted.pdf).

safe and timely release of Leah Sharibu, a schoolgirl who was kidnapped and is currently held hostage and under threat of death by Boko Haram.

Importantly, following his meeting with Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari, President Trump expressed:

We are deeply concerned by religious violence in Nigeria, including the burning of churches and the killing and persecution of Christians. . . . We encourage Nigeria and the federal, state and local leaders to do everything in their power to protect innocent civilians of all faiths, including Muslims and including Christians.<sup>2</sup>

Boko Haram is one of the deadliest and cruelest Islamic terrorist organizations. Since May 2011, it is estimated that Boko Haram has killed more than 37,500 people, displaced 2.4 million individuals, and created 228,000 refugees.<sup>3</sup> This massive humanitarian crisis must be addressed and those responsible brought to justice.

Additionally, reports indicate that since 2013, Boko Haram has abducted approximately 1,000 children in northeast Nigeria.<sup>4</sup> These attacks and kidnappings have been carried out when children are at school and should feel – and be – safe. However, it is estimated that Boko Haram has killed over 2,000 teachers and destroyed more than 1,400 schools.<sup>5</sup> Boko Haram routinely attacks girls' boarding schools in order to kidnap the students.

Specifically, for example, in February of 2018, Boko Haram terrorists abducted 110 students from a girls' boarding school. Of those, five were killed while in captivity. Ultimately, while 104 of the schoolgirls were released, Boko Haram still holds 15-year-old Leah Sharibu *because she refuses to bend to Boko Haram's demands that she renounce her Christian faith and convert to Islam*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>*Trump Pledges Support for Nigeria's Fight Against Boko Haram*, NEWS24 (May 1, 2018, 2:34 PM), <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/trump-pledges-support-for-nigerias-fight-against-boko-haram-20180501>.

<sup>3</sup>*Boko Haram in Nigeria*, Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/interactives/global-conflict-tracker?marker=19#!/conflict/boko-haram-in-nigeria>, (last visited Oct. 9, 2018).

<sup>4</sup>Morgan Winsor, *Boko Haram has Abducted over 1,000 Children, Killed More Than 2,000 Teachers*, ABC NEWS (Apr. 14, 2018, 9:10 AM), <https://abcnews.go.com/International/boko-haram-abducted-1000-children-killed-2000-teachers/story?id=54442518>.

<sup>5</sup>*Id.*

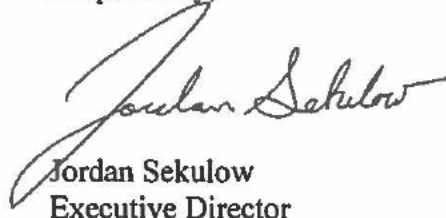
<sup>6</sup>*Nigeria Dapchi Abductions: Schoolgirls Finally Home*, BBC NEWS (Mar. 25, 2018), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-43535872>.

Now, reports have surfaced that Boko Haram has issued an ultimatum by threatening that if their demands are not met this month they will will make Leah a slave for life<sup>7</sup> – or even kill her. According to Leah’s father, Nathan Sharibu, “The terrorist[s] threatened to kill Leah . . . if they don’t get any response to their demands. Time is running out, that is why I am calling on the government to keep talking to them.”<sup>8</sup> Time is indeed running out. It is imperative that the government of Nigeria work quickly to bring Leah home safely. Action must be taken now before it is too late and the United States government must do everything possible to help.

We are certainly grateful for the Nigerian government’s recent efforts to secure Leah’s safe release. However, we are now within the timeframe in which Leah’s captors have threatened to take her life. Time is of the essence. The Nigerian government must continue its efforts and take meaningful action to ensure Leah’s life is saved.

Mr. Ambassador, we urge you to echo President Trump’s concern for the plight of Nigerian Christians, and to reiterate that Nigeria must take immediate action to provide lasting safety and security for all its citizens, including those Christians targeted by Boko Haram. But most urgently, the Nigerian government must respond and take all necessary action to secure the safe release of Leah Sharibu. All Nigerian school children, Christian or otherwise, deserve to live safely and freely. All children should be able to attend school, learn, and grow without the constant fear of death or abduction. Finally, we urge you to take whatever steps are necessary, through diplomatic or other means, to assist Nigeria to this end.

Respectfully,



Jordan Sekulow  
Executive Director

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<sup>7</sup>Ahmad Salkida, *Boko Haram Executes Another Red Cross Worker, Says Leah will Live as Slave*, The Cable (Oct. 15, 2018, 8:59 PM), <https://www.thecable.ng/breaking-boko-haram-executes-another-aide-worker-says-leah-will-live-as-slave>.

<sup>8</sup>Bukola Adebayo, *‘Our Daughter is Facing a Death Sentence,’ Parents of Leah Sharibu Cry Out*, CNN (Oct. 4, 2018, 12:53 PM), <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/04/africa/nigerian-girl-boko-haram-ultimatum/index.html>.