



May 7, 2014

Hon. John Kerry  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry,

On behalf of the 1.5 million members of the American Federation of Teachers, I am writing about the dreadful abduction of 300 girls from their secondary school in northeast Nigeria. We pray for their safe return to their homes and families, and we stand with the people of Nigeria in their hope to live in peace and security.

We welcome your condemnation of this “unconscionable crime” and your pledge of U.S. assistance to the Nigerian government to ensure these children can be returned to their communities, and the perpetrators brought to justice.

This horrifying incident has resonated with our members, who are shocked by the kidnapping itself, and deeply concerned about the larger issue of continuing threats to girls and young women as they seek to improve their lives through education. Comments made by Boko Haram that that girls should be married as pre-adolescents, and should be denied education, call out for the strongest response. There can be no justification, in religion or culture or ideology, for such a belief.

We look forward to the United States engaging in a dialogue with Nigeria, not only to address the issue of security, but also to address the broader issue of how, working together, we can assure that Nigeria’s girls and young women will have the chance for a future that includes education, hope and opportunity.

Nigeria must lead this cause to protect and improve the lives of its people, but Nigerians should also know that the United States stands with them in solidarity, both in the fight against terrorism and the drive to better their future.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lorretta Johnson  
Secretary-Treasurer

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cc: Hon. James F. Entwistle, U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria  
Honorable Adebawale Ibidapo Adefuye, Ambassador of Nigeria to the United States  
Education International

American Federation  
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

AFT Teachers  
AFT PSRP  
AFT Higher Education  
AFT Public Employees  
AFT Healthcare

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