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DEAN, NEW JERSEY DELEGATION

Statement of U.S. Rep. Chris Smith at Press Conference in Nigeria

U.S. Rep. Chris Smith (NJ-04)
Sr. Member of House Foreign Affairs Committee,
Africa Subcommittee Chairman
Excerpts of Remarks
Unity Fountain, Abuja, Nigeria
June 7, 2014

“Last September I met with Boko Haram victims in Abuja and Jos and heard heartbreaking accounts of brutality, abductions and murder.

“In November, Habilia Adama, who survived Boko Haram terrorists who forced him from his home and shot him in the head after he refused to recant his faith, testified along with U.S. State Department officials at a hearing I chaired in Washington. His harrowing story marked by courage, faith and survival is illustrative of so many victims. It is truly inspiring to again see him.

“Despite escalating acts of terrorism—many Nigerians including and especially the faith community—Catholics, evangelicals, Muslims—have responded with extraordinary courage, resiliency, resolve and empathy for the victims.

“Nothing, however, has galvanized global opinion and a sense of extreme urgency more than the abduction of the Chibok school girls.

“This week I met in Abuja with one of the Chibok girls who escaped early on in the ordeal. This brave young woman has suffered much—was clearly traumatized and in emotional pain. You could hear it in her voice, see it in her eyes—as she sat motionless recounting her story. Yet she spoke of her concern not for herself, but her friends and classmates who remain in captivity.

“I met with a Muslim father of two girls abducted from the Chibok school. Fighting back tears, he said the agony was unbearable. The story of his daughters underscored the fact that Boko Haram brutalizes Muslims as well.

“This week, I also met with other Boko Haram victims, including a Christian mother whose two daughters were abducted in February 2012. She told us her husband was shot on the spot. Three months later, Boko Haram returned and asked if her son had converted to Islam. When she said no—he was shot and killed.

“As a sovereign nation, Nigeria owns the responsibility to secure the Chibok girls’ safe release, but the international community can and must play a robust supporting role especially in the area of intelligence and counterinsurgency training.”

Smith met with numerous Nigerian and U.S. Embassy officials, including:

- Nenna Elendu-Ukeje, Chairwoman of the Nigerian House Foreign Affairs Committee
- Beni Lar, Chair of Nigerian House Human Rights Committee
- B.E. Jedy-Agba, Executive Secretary of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons
- Nigerian and American personnel at the Joint Combined Fusion Center (on intelligence and security issues)