



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 160

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, JUNE 12, 2014

No. 91

House of Representatives

Bring Back the Abducted Girls

Boko Haram's Reign of Terror Must End

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey: Mr. Speaker, last week, I spent four days in Nigeria, and while in Abuja, I met with one of the Chibok girls who escaped after the infamous mid-April Chibok school abduction.

This brave young woman has suffered much, was clearly traumatized, and in deep emotional pain. You could hear it in her voice. You could see it in her eyes, as she sat motionless, recounting her tragic story, yet she spoke of concern not for herself, but for her friends and classmates who remain in captivity. She pleaded for their rescue and for their protection.

In Nigeria last week, 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.

Last week, I also met with several other Boko Haram victims, including a Christian mother whose two daughters were abducted in February of 2012.

For the past 2 years, this mom has had no idea where her two girls are or whether or not those two daughters are dead or alive. She told me that her husband was shot on the spot when they raided her home, simply for being a Christian.

Three months later, Boko Haram returned and asked if her son had converted to Islam. When she said no, he was shot and killed.

Mr. Speaker, on another trip to Nigeria, last September, I traveled to the city of Jos and visited churches that were firebombed by Boko Haram and met with survivors, those who lost loved ones and

those who have been wounded in those terrorist attacks.

In an internally displaced camp, I met with a man named Habila Adamu. Habila Adamu lived in the north, had fled to Jos, but here was a situation where Boko Haram broke into his home, put an AK-47 to his face and said: If you convert to Islam, I will spare your life. If you don't, I will shoot you.

He told the terrorists: I am ready to meet my Lord.

He was shot immediately, with his wife pleading with the terrorists not to do so. It blew away much of his face. When I met with him, I was so moved by his story, I invited him to a hearing.

When he testified, he told that story to members of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, and you could have heard a pin drop—what courage, what tenacity, what love. I was struck by the fact that he had absolutely no malice for the man who pulled the trigger, who almost turned him into a martyr.

In Jos, I also met with Archbishop Kaigama and Muslim leaders in that city who told me how Christian and Muslims were working together to assist the victims and to try to mitigate the threat, but, Mr. Speaker, the violence has gotten demonstrably worse and shows absolutely no signs of abating.

After the May 20 Boko Haram bombings in Jos that killed 118 innocent people—that is less than a month ago—and wounded at least 56, Catholic Archbishop Kaigama, an extraordinarily brave and compassionate religious leader, reminded the world that Boko Haram is faithful to its target of

eliminating and destroying Christianity from parts of the country.

“The only difference is that we are not just seeing Christians dying and being abducted, we are seeing attacks on Muslims, as well, who Boko Haram considers not Muslim enough.”

The Archbishop said:

“The international community can help in a number of important ways. The sale of arms is of grave concern. In short, the government needs help in cutting the supply lines of Boko Haram.”

Mr. Speaker, Emmanuel Ogebe, special counsel for the Justice for Jos Project and also a leader in the Jubilee Campaign testified yesterday:

“Boko Haram continues to ravage northern Nigeria, killing over 1,000 people in 8 weeks. The terrorists are bolder and more diabolical than ever and have completely overrun several borderline rural communities. Prior to the Chibok schoolgirl abductions, much of the international response was inattention and inaction. Now, it is attention, but inadequate action.”

Mr. Ogebe also testified that it took the United States 25 months after the first two Americans were attacked and 1 year after the third and fourth Americans were targeted before Boko Haram was designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the Obama administration.

I would note, for the record, that during the last 2 years, I have pushed hard—and I am not the only one in this Congress who has done so—to designate Boko Haram as a foreign terrorist organization, or FTO. I introduced legislation, H.R. 3209, the Boko Haram Terrorist Designation Act of 2013, in an attempt to make it so.

On November 13 of last year, I chaired yet another congressional hearing on Boko Haram and was prepared to advance the legislation. However, on the day before the hearing, the Obama administration finally announced FTO designation—late, but welcomed—which is designed, in part, to slow or help interdict the flow of arms and terror financing.

Mr. Speaker, at yesterday’s hearing, we also heard from the former American Ambassador to Nigeria, Robin Renee Sanders, an experienced and very distinguished diplomat, who told my committee:

“Nigeria is at the beginning of a long war, and they have to realize this. This is no longer a localized conflict or insurgency. There is no easy fix, and every attack and response to Boko Haram cannot be viewed as a death knell blow to it. A long-range security framework to the terrorist threat is what is needed.”

Ambassador Sanders said:

“The security services need to regroup, re-approach, and readdress it as such, in order to begin to get off their heels on the defensive and get on an aggressive offense. This has not happened yet, and Boko Haram has not only succeeded in terrorizing 60,000 square miles of territory, but it is also evident that, with the late April 2014 attacks, that they have the ability to reach locations just 15 kilometers outside of Abuja, either with sleeper cells or with bombs getting past checkpoints.”

Current Nigerian security services have never experienced anything like this, like what it is facing with Boko Haram. Boko Haram is executing asymmetrical warfare, and for the most part, this is outside of the framework of the security forces and their capability to effectively respond.”

Among Ambassador Sanders’ recommendations were additional materials, especially mobile communications equipment, vehicles, technologically-based bomb detection equipment; improved control over their very porous borders; improved military planning, logistics, equipment and supplies, including sufficient spare parts and fuel; expanded small Special Forces units and a 24–7 counterterrorism center; establishing a satellite CT center closer to the northeast region, so information doesn’t take so long to react to or to be analyzed; and more rapid response forces, or what we call mobile units, and probably more outposts.

Another expert at yesterday’s hearing, Dr. Peter Pham, director, Africa Center, Atlantic Council, testified:

“A comprehensive strategy is required to respond to the burgeoning threat posed by Boko Haram, including the promotion of specialized training for Nigerian security forces. Undoubtedly, the Nigerian security forces, both military and police, need that assistance in the fight. However, the need is less a matter of personnel and equipment than training, especially in intelligence and investigations.”

Mr. Speaker, while some training has begun—and U.S. military personnel deserve high praise and thanks for their professionalism, skill, and commitment—much more needs to be done. Human rights vetting must be improved so that eligible soldiers are not wrongfully excluded and intelligence cooperation needs to be expanded.

Let me also express my gratitude to our Embassy personnel for also working overtime in trying to mitigate this threat and to do the work that the Embassy does so selflessly. They are doing a wonderful job, and I appreciate their work in hosting and helping with my trip there.

Finally, just let me say, nothing has galvanized global opinion and a sense of extreme urgency more

than the abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls, and now other girls since. Some 20 more girls were just abducted by Boko Haram.

Despite escalating threats of terrorism, however, many Nigerians, including and especially the faith community—Catholics, Evangelicals, Muslims—have responded with extraordinary courage, resiliency, resolve, and empathy for the victims, and they hope and they are working to ensure that Boko Haram—the whole country—is stopped.

Counterinsurgency training and intelligence capacity are among the highest priorities, and my hope is that more, not less, will be done going forward in order to mitigate this threat and to end the reign of terror that is being promoted by Boko Haram.