



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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May 9, 2014

Ambassador Susan Rice
National Security Adviser
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear National Security Adviser Rice:

As Chair of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I write to condemn the heinous kidnapping of 276 innocent schoolgirls in Nigeria by Boko Haram and all the other criminal acts that this group has perpetrated over the years. I encourage the United States to assist the Nigerian Government to promote national security and social development, especially in the Northeast. I also urge you to partner with civil society, especially faith-based institutions, both Christian and Muslim, to strengthen their efforts to stop the violence and build social cohesion. Their efforts will be crucial in counteracting the extremist religious views espoused by Boko Haram.

In a recent address John Cardinal Onaiyekan said, "It is therefore in the ultimate best interests of everyone if we all defend and uphold the rights of each to religious freedom, the second most important right after the right to life itself. This is the way of the future. Our nation cannot afford to lag behind."

The Church in Nigeria has called for continuous dialogue among political, military and religious leaders to end the violence, complemented by effective police and military action that brings perpetrators of violence to justice while respecting human and civil rights. Nigeria is a country rich in its human and natural resources. Building unity among all Nigerians will help build peace and prosperity for all.

In the wake of the bombing in Abuja and the kidnapping of the girls, I wrote to Cardinal Onaiyekan to express our condolences and solidarity with the Church and people of Nigeria and to encourage them in their constant efforts to counter the forces of religious extremism and social division.

I am encouraged that the United States Government has taken additional measures to help the Nigerian Government bring perpetrators to justice. I urge you to increase your support to the Catholic Church which has always been a voice for peace and has actively worked with the Islamic Community to conduct interfaith dialogue and people to people peacebuilding.

Let me reiterate the commitment of the Committee on International Justice and Peace to work with you to protect religious freedom, peace and prosperity in Nigeria.

Sincerely yours,

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Most Reverend Richard E. Pates

Bishop of Des Moines

Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace