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Statement : 08/05/2014

Statement of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensouda, on the abduction of schoolgirls in Nigeria

I am deeply troubled and alarmed by disturbing reports of alleged abduction of over 200 schoolgirls in Borno State, Nigeria, and the most recent reports that more schoolgirls have been abducted this week. Such acts shock the conscience of humanity and could constitute crimes that fall within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court ("ICC").

I share the agonizing pain of the parents of the abducted girls, as well as their hope that the on-going national search and rescue efforts will result in the swift and safe return of their children. International assistance should be made readily available to bolster such efforts, as required by the national authorities.

The troubling phenomenon of targeting females during conflict, this time, in Borno State, cannot be tolerated and must be stopped. No stone should be left unturned to bring those responsible for such atrocious acts to justice either in Nigeria or at the ICC.

I express my solidarity with the families of the abducted girls and the people of Nigeria. The abducted schoolgirls must be released immediately and allowed to return unharmed to their communities and families.

Background

The situation in Nigeria has been under [preliminary examination](#) by the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC since 2010. In August 2013, the Office issued a [report](#) concluding that [there is a reasonable basis to believe that] Boko Haram has been committing crimes against humanity of murder and persecution since July 2009. Information gathered by the Office indicates that there has been a sharp increase in the frequency and intensity of attacks attributed to Boko Haram since January 2014, including a significant increase in alleged abductions of women and girls and of sexual slavery. Some of Boko Haram's alleged crimes would also amount to war crimes, as the Prosecutor has recently [concluded](#) that the situation constitutes a non-international armed conflict.

As Nigeria is a State Party to the Rome Statute, the ICC has jurisdiction over war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed on the territory of Nigeria or by its nationals from 1 July 2002 onwards. Having concluded that some of the alleged crimes committed in the Nigeria situation fall within subject-matter jurisdiction of the ICC, the Office of the Prosecutor is currently assessing relevant national proceedings in conformity with the principle of complementarity. Under the Rome Statute, the Nigerian authorities have primary responsibility to

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investigate and prosecute the alleged crimes. Such cases may become admissible before the ICC if there are no relevant investigations or prosecutions in Nigeria, or if the national authorities are unwilling or unable to carry out genuine investigations or prosecutions.

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Source: Office of the Prosecutor

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