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LIST ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

His Excellency Mr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, GCON  
President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

25 September 2014

Your Excellency,

We write today as organizations greatly concerned about the crisis in northeastern Nigeria and the heavy toll it has taken on the civilian population. Intensified attacks by the armed group Boko Haram leave civilians, including children, facing war crimes and other mass atrocities.

Boko Haram has killed thousands of people since the start of the violent insurgency in 2009. According to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) of Nigeria, more than 1.5 million people have been internally displaced since the beginning of the state of emergency in the northeast in May 2013, and the number keeps growing as the violence continues unabated. Nigerian security forces have consistently failed to deter and halt attacks on civilians, including mass abductions. There is also mounting evidence of grave human rights violations and possible war crimes, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and acts of torture, committed against civilians by the security forces and local vigilante groups, collectively known as the Civilian Joint Task Force.

We urge your government to uphold its responsibility to protect populations from mass atrocity crimes and end human rights abuses against civilians. This includes by ensuring that security forces observe international human rights and humanitarian law as they confront Boko Haram, and that all government agencies exercise due process, including fair trials, and uphold the prohibition against torture, enforced disappearances, prolonged detention and arbitrary executions when dealing with suspected Boko Haram members. Independent and transparent investigations should also be conducted into the reported abuses committed by the security forces, and perpetrators held to account without delay. We urge your government to publicly and regularly report on the progress and outcome of these investigations.

While we acknowledge the importance of an effective response to terrorism, our organizations wish to emphasize that respect for human rights is instrumental to successfully defeating this threat.

Yours sincerely,

Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect  
Human Rights Watch  
The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)  
Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflict