

UN chief condemns abduction of school girls in north-east Nigeria, calls for their immediate release

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has denounced the abduction of more than one hundred school girls by suspected Boko Haram insurgents during an attack on an educational institution in north-eastern Nigeria and called for their safe return to their families.

In a [statement](#) attributable to his spokesperson, Mr. Guterres strongly condemned the abduction and the attack which took place on 19 February on the Bursari Government Girls Science Secondary School, located in the town of Dapchi in Nigeria's restive Yobe state.

"The Secretary-General calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all missing girls and for their safe return to their families," read the statement.

The UN chief also urged Nigerian authorities to swiftly bring those responsible for the act to justice.

Also in the statement, Mr. Guterres reiterated UN's solidarity and support to the Governments of Nigeria and other affected countries in the region in their fight against terrorism and violent extremism.

[According](#) to the [Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict](#) – which works for the protection and well-being of children affected by armed conflict – schools in northeast Nigeria continue to be attacked at an alarming rate.

It is estimated that almost 1,400 of educational institutions have been destroyed since the beginning of the insurgency in 2009.

Virginia Gamba, the Special Representative expressed that "overwhelmingly, attacks focus on the abduction, forcible recruitment and use, killing and maiming as well as sexual abuse of innocent Nigerian girls whose only crime is to be female and to dream of an education."

"These abhorrent crimes must stop now. I call on all those with the means to engage to stop these violations and return our girls unharmed," she added.