

GIRLS Education Resource Pack

Boko Haram Information Sheet

For GIRLS, a HighTide production

Who are Boko Haram?

Boko Haram is a militant Islamic extremist group based in northeastern Nigeria in Africa.

They have caused havoc in Africa's most populous country through a wave of bombings, assassinations and abductions and are fighting to overthrow the government and create an Islamic state.

Boko Haram promotes a version of Islam which makes it "haram", or forbidden, for Muslims to take part in any political or social activity associated with Western society. This includes voting in elections, wearing shirts and trousers or receiving a secular education (meaning an education which is not connected with religious or spiritual matters).

Boko Haram regards the Nigerian state as being run by non-believers, regardless of whether the president is Muslim or not.

Between 2009 and 2015, they have killed 20,000 people and displaced 2.3 million from their homes.

The Kidnapping in Chibok

On the night of 14/15 April 2014, 276 female students were kidnapped from the Government Secondary School in the town of Chibok in Borno State, Nigeria.

Militants broke into the school, pretending to be guards and telling the girls to get out and

come with them. A large number of students were taken away in trucks. Houses in Chibok were also burned down in the incident. The school had been closed for four weeks prior to the attack due to the deteriorating security situation, but students from multiple schools had been called in to take final exams in physics.



The 82 recently released girls. Credit: EPA

Since then hopes were raised on various occasions that the 219 remaining girls might be released. Newspaper reports suggested that Boko Haram was hoping to use the girls as a negotiating pawns in exchange for some of their commanders in jail. Some of the girls The girls have been forced into marriage with members of Boko Haram, with a reputed “bride price” of 2,000 naira each (\$6/£4).

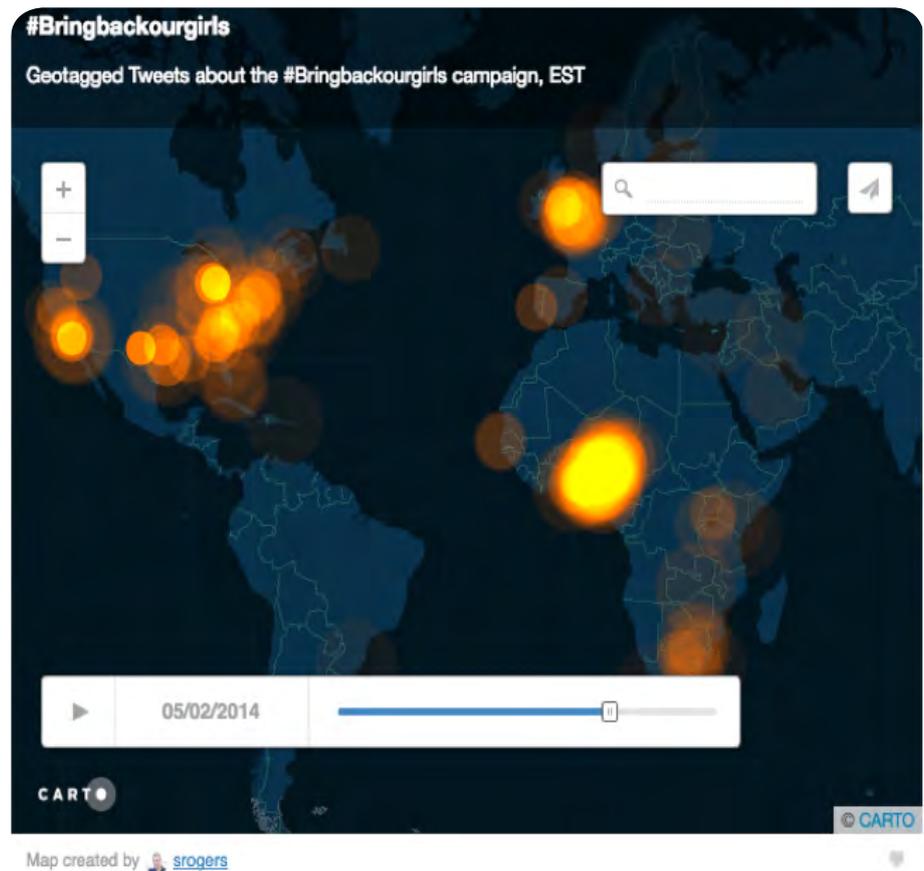
In May 2016, one of the missing girls, Amina Ali, was found. She claimed that the remaining girls were still there, but that six had died. A second girl was discovered later in the week, but parents have expressed doubts as her name is not among those originally missing. A further 21 girls were freed in October 2016, while another was rescued the next month.

In May 2017, 82 more girls were freed in exchange for five Boko Haram leaders. Watch the accounts of the family of the 82 most recently released girls: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-39987271>

Social Media

In the days that followed the kidnapping, appallingly little was done to help. The Nigerian military falsely claimed it had rescued the girls, only to retract the claim the very next day. The story barely registered with the international media.

Then, on April 23, Oby Ezekwesili, vice president of the World Bank for Africa, gave a speech in Nigeria in which she urged the government to intervene and “bring back our girls.” Soon after, Twitter users in Nigeria began to repeat her call, adopting the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls.



A timelapse showing tweets including #bringbackourgirls across the globe
View it here: time.com/90693/bringbackourgirls-nigeria-boko-haram/

HIGH TIDE

By the time reports emerged that kidnapers had taken some of the girls over state lines to Cameroon and Chad and sold off as sex slaves, #BringBackOurGirls was starting to trend. A few days later, it had exploded around the world and, now, more than a million tweets have been sent with the hashtag, including those sent by Hillary Clinton and Michelle Obama.

The #BringBackOurGirls protest has a verified Facebook page with 236,466 likes and 224,562 followers (Facebook, 2017). It had no official Twitter or Instagram accounts, but they were both major platforms, as millions of hashtags, videos and pictures are consistently shared even today.



Michelle Obama with a #BringBackOurGirls placard

Sources and further reading

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