

# BOKO HARAM

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**Franz Schmidjell (VIDC):** Dear ladies and gentlemen, dear friends. I welcome you in the name of the VIDC, the Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation. I especially would like to welcome our guests on the panel. They will be introduced later on. My name is Franz Schmidjell and I organized this event together with my colleagues from the VIDC whom I thank very much. My thanks also go to VAS, the Association of African Students in Austria, for the good cooperation. Further I would like to thank the Afro-Asian Institute for hosting this event and the Austrian Development Agency, the ADA, for their financial support.

Why did we organize this event? On April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014, more than 200 girls were kidnapped by Boko Haram in a village called Chibok, in the northeastern part of Nigeria. Nigerian women's organizations and human rights groups initiated the campaign "Bring Back Our Girls". Since mid April more than 1,000 other people have died in other attacks. But today, we will not only talk about the terror itself but also about the structural causes, which led to the emergence and growth of Boko Haram.

At the end of last year, the VIDC organized another public discussion about political Islam in West Africa. Professor Ousmane Kane from Harvard Divinity School emphasized the appeal of political Islam or Islamism. 40 to 70% of the Muslim population in the different countries feels attracted to political Islam. This high percentage might be surprising, because West Africa has been known for its relatively peaceful coexistence between the secular state and Islamic traditions. In some of the countries Islamic parties are forbidden by the constitution. Professor Kane also stated that when we talk about political Islam, we have to distinguish between Islamism, militant Islamism and jihadism.

The spread of political Islam in northern Nigeria might have taken another path because of the specific history and the instrumentalization of religion by local politics. Another cause found in many countries is the withdrawal of the state – forced by the structural adjustment programs (SAP) – from public services like education, health, employment or communal services.

But we also want to talk about ways forward, perspectives for non-violent conflict resolution. Will the results of the Paris conference help solve conflict? Can the inter-religious dialogue promote peace among Muslims and Christians? Will the worldwide campaign "Bring Back Our Girls" be helpful? What can the Nigerian diasporas do or what should they do? These might be some questions to tackle this evening.



I would like to introduce our moderator. Mrs. Téclaire Ngo Tam is employed as coordinator at the Südwind Agentur in Vienna. She graduated from the University of Douala and holds a BTS (Advanced Technician Certificate). She studied Journalism and Communication Sciences at the University of Vienna. Téclaire Ngo Tam is a board member of the Afrika Vernetzungsplattform (AVP) in Austria.

**Teclaire Ngo Tam:** First of all, I want to thank the panel for taking the time to discuss this important issue. I wish we could have celebrated recent progress, economic progress in Nigeria today. But unfortunately we still have to report on the difficulties that the country and the continent have to face. Nevertheless, we have some excellent experts on the panel who are going to inform us about the complex challenges Nigeria is facing. Of course some of the questions might stay unanswered, but that is a good thing. It encourages us to do research on our own and to get up and join the discussion.

At this point I would like to briefly introduce our guests. Zainab Ahmed is a journalist for the radio station Deutsche Welle and lives in Bonn. She was born in northeastern Nigeria and studied Law and Journalism at the university there. Also she is the manager of an educational program that is about gender and future matters, focusing on Africa's youth.

Bashir Alhaji-Sheu is a PHD student and lives in Vienna. He wrote his master thesis on ethno-religious violence in northern Nigeria. He works as a guest lecturer for Hausa at the University of Vienna. He was also born in Nigeria and graduated from the university in Maiduguri as well.

Rüdiger Lohlker is a professor of Orientalism at the Philological-Cultural Faculty of the University of Vienna. Among other fields, his main research includes Islamic thinking, Islamic law, the Arabic World and Islam on the Internet.

Gerald Hainzl works at the Institute for Peacekeeping and Conflict Management at the National Defense Academy in Vienna. He has written several papers and studies on African conflict areas like Mali, Chad or Sudan, as well as about international crisis management.

We will try to start at the beginning.

What is Jihadism really? Then we will look into how Boko Haram manifested in Nigeria and how it is organized. We would like to find out what kind of impact this conflict has on women in this area. Later we would like to discuss how Boko Haram can be fought.

What are their limits, where do their strengths lie, which institutions might be of use. It is your turn to be the fifth speaker.



**Rüdiger Lohlker:** Since the 1980s there is a jihadist flow all over the world. In Africa it especially occurred in the northwest, in Maghreb. The former GSPC, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat is quite close to Boko Haram. Also concerning its original name, which consists exactly of that. These movements are focused on two main ideas. On the one hand, the spreading of the pure doctrine of Islam – although I do not want to go into detail about what is Islamic and what is not, that would be a completely different debate – and on the other hand the special emphasis on armed battle, the jihad.

These groups have a long history and turned from some kind of social movement to a violent underground organization that came into being because of pressure from the outside. The actions of the security forces, the military and the police played a big role in that. I think we are experiencing such a process in Nigeria. These groups justify their existence with the social and economic disparities in their society, at least outside of Europe. That is the soil on which they grow. Looking into Boko Haram's history we can see this embedded within a larger framework. The founders come from a Salafist theological and religious background. That is what the aforementioned lecture by professor Ousmane Kane was about (Political Islam in Africa, VIDC Oct. 2013). We have been experiencing a certain interpretation of Islam since the 1980s in various areas all over the world. These movements were promoted by big cash injections from the Persian Gulf, since local groups with Islamic imprints were not able to come up with that kind of money. This is how these movements managed to reach a bigger audience and to spread the understandings of Islam. However, it is not a homogenous flow. We cannot explain these movements with only that, we also need to put the various social and economic disparities in the country under consideration.

For scholars of Islam like me, it is very important to look through history as well, namely the Sokoto Caliphate<sup>1</sup>. There we already got the idea that it is legitimate to rebel against a regime that is not Muslim, in today's case against the Nigerian government. That is the first aspect of a jihadist movement. Another one has developed since the 2000s. It is an increasing occurrence of terrorist groups with a criminal background. If we go back the last ten, fifteen years, we will realize that the jihadist movements and criminal activities overlap. In west and northwest Africa we are witnessing a clearly profitable industry of kidnapping. Especially by kidnapping foreign experts, big amounts of money can be gained and further activities can be promoted. There is clear involvement in smuggling networks. Central players from the jihad underground in Mali and Algeria are known as smugglers. This is only possible by cooperating with secret services. One could not be a successful smuggler in Algeria without contacts to the military and secret services. This field is not transparent at all; there are many rumors. The arms trade has increased a lot since President Gaddafi's fall in Libya.

You could call terrorism a business. This does not exclude that there are stray idealists everywhere. This is absolutely possible. We are able to establish this in other points as well. I will quote a research paper from Pakistan where captured former fighters from the Taliban were interrogated. We found these elements as well; it used to be an adventure to go to Afghanistan. I am not really able to relate to that, I am not sure if young men in Nigeria do not have more absurd ideas, however that might be a gender aspect. Men dominate these movements.

There are so-called internal jihadist connections as well. It is said that Boko Haram might keep in touch with the Al Shabab militia in Somalia. Referring to the military aspect, it seems like the Al-

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<sup>1</sup> The Sokoto Caliphate in Northern [Nigeria](#) was one of the largest empires in Africa during the 19th century (440,000 square kilometers). The empire developed as a result of the Fulani jihads and was the center of politics and economics in the region until it fell to [French](#) and [British](#) colonial armies in the early 20th century.

Qaida in Maghreb (AQMI), obviously educated leading members of Boko Haram.

... Such groups are not about religious ideologies but about certain existential conditions. The aspect is more religious and ideological if it comes down to the jihadist sub-culture. There you will find central ideas like the struggle against disbelievers. That is what all the jihadist sub-cultures have in common. Actions like the kidnappings of these girls are kind of a means to an end in order to gain a reputation within that worldwide sub-culture.

While preparing for this panel I paid special attention to various online forums about the jihad. As far as I can tell, the members of these forums are not convinced that Boko Haram's strategy worked. Video clips were published, but reactions are sparse. No major discussions ensued, which surprised me. I would have expected more. Apparently Nigeria is nothing more than a province concerning the jihad.

So we were asked about the perspective. What are the main motivations for such a movement and how can internal changes, as in the case of Nigeria, be confined? What we experienced so far with these terrorist groups is that you can't really get rid of them. There is always going to be some kind of subgroup of a subgroup of Boko Haram. We have to accept that. It's about security policy. You cannot eliminate them completely. You might be able to restrain them and you can eliminate the soil they flourish in. I think that is the only possibility. I would love to be more optimistic but I simply cannot manage to offer a more positive view concerning this issue. Thank you.

**Teclaire Ngo Tam:** Thank you, Rüdiger, for this elaborate attempt to explain what Boko Haram is all about. It seems to me that the group cannot be defined clearly. There are the crimes, ideology and several other aspects. But I think it is not about Islamism. I think we can exclude that. This is very important to me. It is not Islamism and while the world tries to define this movement, they are doing quite a lot of damage. This is what you can tell us about in more detail, how this movement manifested in this area, how it spreads, so that we might get a better idea about what we are experiencing here. It is your turn, Bashir.



**Bashir Alhaji-Sheu:** Hello. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I want to talk about Boko Haram, which is a very complicated issue. It is difficult to come up with something concrete, however, what I wanted to talk about today are only the key issues or key factors. First of all I want to talk about the transitional journey of Boko Haram, how it came to be and where they are now. I also want to talk about the educational system in northern Nigeria. I want to talk about the usage of the language in northern Nigeria and how it creates attention based on religion. And I am going to talk about the globalization of terrorism and the role of the Nigerian government and all these aspects.

Actually, the union of Boko Haram did not start with the brutal attacks and kidnappings. Boko Haram started around the 60s, when Mohammed Marwa, known as Maitatsine, came with his radical preaching. He was able to recruit a lot of people, thousands of students. The Emir of Kano saw him as a dangerous person and kicked him out of Nigeria. He settled in Cameroon to become a teacher. After a decade he came back. The Nigerian security noticed that he was back in Nigeria, but they did nothing. He started propagating his extreme ideas.

In beginning of the 80s huge protests erupted in Kano, which resulted in killings. So many people lost their lives and properties. Mohammed Marwa was killed in that incident in Kano, but his followers, the Yan Tatsine, went to Maiduguri, they went to Yobe, Damaturu and Gombe. And then, there were so many killings, in one city after the other, it was a huge bloody modern religion then. It was chaos. I remember; I was young then. The memory of Maitatsine won't disappear. Since the mid-80s, nobody knew anything about them. At the beginning of the 90s, a new name appeared: the Taliban. They started operating in a small group, in a village called Kanama in Yobe State. They started teaching as well but this time around a different ideology, because Maitatsine believe in the one use of the Koran... and only the Koran.

The group, with a new idea, the teachings of Islam and the teachings of the prophet Mohammed, is growing in number. When they were around two hundred, they attacked other villages and they started to attack the police, station by station. Nobody wanted this incident. The Nigerian government was so reluctant to act on it. But then, when the Nigerian government saw that they were growing in number, they intervened. Within four days they were crushed, completely. But the question is, we thought, Boko Haram is gone, I mean, the Taliban is gone. Later on they appeared again in the Mandara Mountains. So do not forget, Mohammed Marwa, Maitatsine, is from Cameroon, Mohammed Yusuf, the founder of the new Boko Haram, originally is from Niger. He started propaganda in villages in the border region and moved to the nearby Mandara Mountains. They started attacking police stations to get arms and they went to the University of Maiduguri, they were able to recruit students from the university. Overnight, a lot of students from the University of Maiduguri left. Their parents did not know where they were; nobody knew where they were. They went into the bush. Mohammed Yusuf came again; he started again to recruit people, massively. And the government of Nigeria was looking on and doing nothing. Every Friday it was chaos. They were dressed in uniforms and you could see how powerful they felt. I think the government had the opportunity to crush the group. Mohammed Yusuf has been arrested a couple of times by the security services. But he was released again, nobody knows why. This is, in brief, how Boko Haram came about.

Another aspect is the educational system in northern Nigeria. We have the Islamic or Koran school system, what we call the "Madrasa". This system is very present nowadays. This is a system where the parents are very reluctant or irresponsible. Once they have a kid who is five years old, they send him out to a village, to the city, without shelter and food. I am talking about in millions, not thousands; you see them all over northern Nigeria. They have to go and give the child to the Imam or

to the scholar. The scholar is not responsible for his food or his clothing. They will continue to study, faithful, begging for food, for clothes, for money. On top of that, the parents are expecting that they send something back to them... When they graduate from school, they have no skills for employment, nothing. The only thing they can do is just wait for the big man to come to them, to come to the Imam and give the money because they want a prayer. That is how they eat. These millions of people are in trouble, without education, with no skills. When somebody from the Maghreb or from the Middle East comes with an extreme idea and with a lot of money, they will take it and they will fight, because they have no choice. The educational system is really bad. Once they find themselves out, they are able to interpret the Koran, they start preaching. There is no control in Nigeria, you can go to any part of Nigeria and you can preach.

The next point I wanted to talk about is the usage of language, which has contributed to the crises in northern Nigeria. I am a typical northerner. I grew up with friends, Christian friends, Muslim friends, there was no difference. We were one, we ate together, we played together, we went to school together. And what do we call them? Christa. That is the Hausa name for Christians. Christa. In Islam Christians and Jews refer to al-Kitab, which means the people of the book. They refer to people of the book. So an Arab man would never say to a Christian “Kafir”. “Kafir” means somebody who does not believe, a non-believer. And overnight this became a slogan. You know, start calling Christians “Arnar” which has a very bad connotation. “Arni” it is very bad. It hurts when you call somebody “Arani”. He knows the meaning, but he knows he believes. An Arab man who believes in the Koran calls a Christian a “Nasara” and a Jew a “Yahud”. “Kafir” is a non-believer and Christians are not “Kafir”. In this mentioned area they preach and they refer to anyone as “Kafir” or “Arani”. When this happened, the Christians became insecure; they started withdrawing and separating; even in the same city.

**Teclaire Ngo Tam:** Thank you Bashir. One fact that shocked the world was the kidnapping of the girls. We have seen through the media but I do not know if that was their first attack against women. There have been much more before and we did not know. Even when it was covered we still focus on this one case. It was shown extensively by the media. What is your experience with this incident?



**Zainab Ahmed Mohammed:** If we look at the history of war and conflict, we know that women are always the victims of circumstances. We have seen how women have suffered when the men go out to the field, to the battlefield... I mean, when the man goes to the battlefield, the woman is left at home to take care of children. She now has to get up for the family, not only African

countries. I think the European countries have also experienced this situation during the World War. We have seen in all the conflicts in African countries, in Mali, in Congo, in South Sudan, through the local or international media, how the women have suffered. Women have been raped, they have been tortured in different degrees. We cannot only talk about war or conflict, we talk about gender-

based violence, we talk about women in particular, because they are the direct victims of this situation.

Like I said, a woman is always at home because she has to care for the children, she has to take care of the family when the man is not there. In Borno State we saw that the Nigerian Government was the first that had this issue of arresting families, wives and children of members of Boko Haram. So when the Nigerian security arrested the family members, including of top members of Boko Haram, the Boko Haram said okay: "You arrested our family members, our wives, our small kids". Then they started taking government officials and later on the French family.

At the end of the day the French family was released. We do not know what happened, we do not know what has been agreed between the government of Nigeria, Cameroon and France. Boko Haram started attacking some places in Maiduguri, some barracks in Bama, where they arrested a lot of women, most of them were just victims of circumstances. They just went there, to visit their family member at the barracks and they were caught. They killed hundreds of men and then they went away with their wives and the children. What have they done? They are not part of the incident. We have to consider that most of the wives of Boko Haram members do not know that their men or their husbands are part of this Boko Haram thing.

A woman was arrested and interrogated. But she did not know that her husband was a member of Boko Haram, she did not even know about the existence of anything like Boko Haram because he is a Cameroonian married in Nigeria. The husband had been accused of being a member of Boko Haram. The authorities looked for him but he was not at home. She was at home, pregnant and with some children. They just went away with her but she did not know why she was arrested. You have to understand the culture and tradition of northern Nigeria. Most women, especially those in the villages or in small towns, do not even know what their husbands do for a living. The man will leave in the morning and will come back in the evening with his leather bag of shopping. He brings the money to feed the children and you, then he leaves again. You do not dare to ask what he is doing, you do not want any trouble, you are just the wife. You are married to him, so you are not supposed to ask anything about him. So you know, you are becoming a victim of circumstances, when the security agency is in your house and arrests you because your husband is an alleged member of Boko Haram. We have seen a lot of situations, even before this kidnapping of these two hundred girls.

The kidnapping of these two hundred girls is not really a mystery in Nigeria. If you go to Maiduguri, the home base of Boko Haram, you will see small girls, perhaps twelve or thirteen years old, walking on the street. They are not going to school, they hock on the street, they have to go out there with some small local staff and sell it on the streets so that they can bring money home to the family. A lot of those girls have been kidnapped, even before the kidnapping of the two hundred girls. They have been forced to be slaves, to be cooks, even to be the subject of rape, which is common in conflict cases. The kidnapping of the over two hundred girls came suddenly into the media, it came into the public, perhaps because of the large number of girls that were taken at once.

I cannot imagine how seven trucks in a state which is one emergency for one year with supposedly strict security can take away the girls. You are not allowed to go out after seven o'clock, the security agencies are moving around. The girls were meant to come back to write exams, promised that there was security for their final exams. Seven big trucks moved into the small town of Chibok, with security, a place which is heavily under security. Seven trucks moved into that town, to the hostel, packed those girls up without anybody seeing anything. It is a very big question, what happened in Chibok. Those of them who escaped from the kidnapping came back and gave their stories. They told how they were taken without anybody knowing it, how this was possible under emergency. They said they were supposed to be taken care of by the military and police. Seven trucks were moving and you would not find out what happened, and security allowed those trucks to move in and out. They went away. The governmental officials did not even believe that those girls were kidnapped. Even though their parents were crying in the media. One mother died because two of her girls were taken away. Two teenagers and there is nobody who will tell you what is happening to them or where they are. Nobody knows their situation apart from the video that was uploaded on Youtube, which showed that they had been converted to Islam, wearing some satin cloth... Islam respects women; if there is any religion that respects women I think it is Islam... You need to go there and see what is happening. These women, some of them are sick. When they start talking they cry, some of them do not even have tears to cry anymore, because they have just a little knowledge of what is happening and the government is not doing anything. Okay, they invited foreign countries like the United States and France for technical support, to find out where these girls are.

You know, we have seen a lot of resolutions by the UN and other institutions. But they are just in theory and unfortunately even the local anti-terrorism and those people that are fighting against terrorism have cared very little about women. You should know that women need special care because they are at home; they are the ones who are very vulnerable to every situation. But nobody cares about it. The international community is not doing anything about it. It depends on the kind of violence they are facing, but women are suffering from all these conflicts.

**Teclaire Ngo Tam:** Zainab, I can see, you are really upset. You are right, but this initiative "Bring Back Our Girls" – what is your feeling about that?

**Zainab Ahmed Mohammed:** My feeling about this "Bring Back" initiative is that it is nonsense and politics. That is just a political game they are playing. You cannot just stand in every city and hold sign "Bring Back Our Girls". Like recently in Abuja, we have this campaign group of "Bring Back Our Girls". They have been there for several weeks just sitting and drinking and eating and holding signs. When they see the media they get up and start screaming and shouting "bring back our girls". Even Michelle Obama in America held that sign "Bring Back Our Girls". We have seen in various cities in Europe where people are campaigning but I think those are just politics and just to show to the media that everybody cares; but that is not it. We need action. We need actually to get those girls back and even there are more than three hundred girls who have been held by these people.

**Teclaire Ngo Tam:** Since that kidnapping we have seen a lot of politicians, let's say, gatherings of politicians in Africa and elsewhere to talk about the matter. Gerald, what is the status of these reactions from the different sides?



**Gerald Hainzl:** Thank you very much. Though I have to disappoint you on two notes now. I do not have a more positive view of this situation and I have more questions than answers. I would also like to call attention to my choice of words, since it might sound familiar. I am using words that have become common since 2001, with which media attention is sought.

Today there was news that Nigeria will cooperate with another country concerning the "war on terror". These words may sound very familiar to you. The state in question is Pakistan. In the same news segment they mentioned that Nigeria would empower bilateral relations and also the maritime cooperation with Sri Lanka. I see confused faces. I too am unsure about this, also because we are talking about Asian states. If we think about the summit in Paris that took place on May 17<sup>th</sup>, where some European states and the European union have been involved, then the analysis is quite exciting. The presidents from Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin joined. They met deputies from France, Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the USA and the EU of course. The "Western States" (as I will call them) confirmed their support of regional initiatives, both logistically and technically. This cooperation should destroy Boko Haram. At the same time, the African states promised to cooperate in the battle against Boko Haram. The president from Chad said that they want to start a war against Boko Haram. Within this conference the African states confirmed a regional strategy for common border protection and to establish an official news exchange. The question that comes up is if you want to work on a strategy to prevent the smuggling of weapons and to build up control for the borders together, then why is a Western forum needed? Where is the place of the African union in this context? Regionally there is no organization established well enough to take the lead on this. Before the conference in Paris the Ministry of Foreign Affairs proposed to support the Nigerian armed forces with military consultants. At the same time, they want to empower the relationship between Cameroon and Nigeria. One of the main questions is: are Nigeria and Cameroon actually willing to cooperate closely with each other, also concerning official news? France has already made such promises as well, namely in February at a peace conference in Abuja. France announced that it will go along with armed actions against Boko Haram and they emphasized the importance of Nigeria being cooperative with their neighboring states. France and the Western allies said no to military operations in Nigeria and so let Nigeria take care of everything itself. The relationship between France and Nigeria is getting better again since the operation SERVAL in Mali is over. In those days Nigeria felt superior. That is why the Nigerian government actually belongs to the winners. The Nigerian president was the first to notice the connection between Boko Haram and al-Qaida. Of course that is something that one can have legitimate doubts about. That is one of the terms with

which you can raise international attention. But there are several things that no one is talking about, for example human rights abuse by the Nigerian armed forces within the battle against Boko Haram. I am thinking about blackmail, out of court executions of civilians, kidnapping and assault of alleged Boko Haram fighter's relatives.

So what could a cooperation look like? I don't know if it might be possible to develop a new regional organization with this group of countries. In fact, it would just be another regional organization that somehow aims to ensure security. I wonder if the organizations that already exist could be more helpful in this situation. However, which regional organization could that be? Could it be the Economic Community of West African States, briefly called ECOWAS or CEDEAO (Communauté économique des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest)? But Cameroon and Chad are not members of this organization. The Economic Community of Central African States, briefly called CEEAC (Communauté Economique des États d'Afrique Central)? But Nigeria and other affected states are not members of this one. The community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) or Communauté des Etats Sahélo-Sahariens (COMESSA) does not have the structure to work on such issues. So the main question would be, where is the African Union and which kind of solutions could they provide within this conflict? There is another big one I have not yet mentioned: the People's Republic of China. China and the Chinese interests are of course also affected. The assaults in Cameroon by the Boko Haram are against Chinese interests. China was not invited to join the conference in Paris. China seems to be quite reserved in other conflicts as well, although they might be an areal player.

The fact that the international community, especially the West, left the conduct to Nigeria, might be connected with the experiences in Afghanistan, Somalia, Rwanda, and Iraq. They do not like to deploy European soldiers anymore. Thank you.

**Teclaire Ngo Tam:** I would like to ask you, do you think that families have been released? For example, families that got kidnapped in Cameroon and that got brought to Nigeria? If so, what might be the key factor for the releases?

**Gerald Hainzl:** There are regional mediators. Kidnapping is a business of course. Kidnappings are a trade for organized crime that you can earn huge amounts of money with. Many so-called terror organizations as in West Africa have to get along with them like drug distribution, human trafficking, smuggling of cigarettes and smuggling of medicine. There are often conflicts between the certain groups. It is about who is allowed to control which sections or who is allowed to control which kind of deals.

**Teclaire Ngo Tam:** One more question: Why is Nigeria that important for the whole world? We know that there are even worse things happening in this region. Could you explain this to us?

**Gerald Hainzl:** Of course the "Bring Back Our Girls" campaign plays a larger role since it gained higher media attention. I do not know if you are aware that since this kidnapping about thousand people

died in Nigeria within several assaults? We do not hear about that in the news, at least not in Austria, although even the newspapers in Nigeria quite reluctantly report on that. Often it is also because of coincidences that certain incidents get greater media attention than others.

**Teclaire Ngo Tam:** So it is not about oil after all?

**Gerald Hainzl:** Of course it is about oil, but oil is only one of several key factors in this situation. It is not one of the main factors concerning this kind of situation.

**Teclaire Ngo Tam:** Now we have time to discuss everything. Feel free to ask, comment on something, make a statement... If you would like to ask a specific speaker something, please refer to him or her directly.

KOMMENTARE/FRAGEN:



**Audience:** The “Bring Back Our Girls” actually made the government realize that the girls were missing. Before you started seeing Michelle Obama, they were claiming that nobody was missing. I support you that it is total nonsense, is politics, but not all action. I wonder why the action in Europe and all over the world made the government realize that something went wrong.

Secondly, I want to support you on the fact that the women were really vulnerable; women have suffered a lot. Yesterday, a nomad village of Fulani was attacked and they took the wives and the children when the men were out there with the cows. This is the second time they have come to that particular village. They villagers had to give a cow to Boko Haram in exchange, to get their wives back. They have done it once and they never said anything to the government.

We should not forget the sponsors of Boko Haram. You said they came with seven trucks into a small village. They operated and left. This is a state of emergency. Which means even the government has no power in the states. You have to check how they get their support, how do they get money. We had journalists saying if the states were controlled by the federal government, they would have reacted. It did not happen because the states seem to be not part of Nigeria. We still have to shout loud so that government realizes that this is one country that they have to save it.

**Audience:** Hi, first of all thank you very much to all of the speakers, very different perspectives so it was really interesting to hear. I have been working since the beginning of this year in cooperation with ECOWAS Commission in Abuja on the issue of human trafficking within a broader project on migration in the region. What is extremely interesting is that the kidnapping of the girls in Chibok took place at almost exactly the same time as two bombings in Abuja. It seems to like a strategy for media attention on the part of Boko Haram. What do you think about this? The point is more a

comment; it is more about longer-term perspective. I learned as a European in Nigeria how everybody lives together with different religions. In earlier times, everybody prayed to a different god, but respected each other. You know, the media, then telling me and telling other people all the time that this is ethnic's drive, it depends on language and on the words that you use. I read during the last few days that the governor of Kano State has declared or he wants to impose to sharia law in Kano State. You have such a diversity of religions and ethnic groups and Nigeria as one identity was created by British colonialism. So I am wondering about what all of this says for the future unity of Nigeria and how federalism could perhaps be improved in order to allow for that.

**Audience:** I have two questions. My first one goes to Mr. Hainzl. How exactly is China the big one missing in all of this? We know that Saudi Arabia (as well as other states from the Persian Gulf) should be a dialogue partner, especially because of the assumed funding...

And you, Ms Mohammed, I would like to ask, do the poor steps from the authorities and the Nigerian government result from the diverse Islamic flows and their own structures, like Boko Haram, which simply do not get along with Nigeria's constitution? I remember reading about a woman in northeastern Nigeria being stoned to death four years ago. This seems to also have been tolerated by a lot of people who weren't part of Boko Haram.

**Zainab Ahmed Mohammed:** The "Bring Back Our Girls" campaign was okay at the beginning. If something happened for people who did not have the right to do anything, like the women in Chibok, it is okay. Representatives of women who gathered in Abuja to fight for the rights was okay at the beginning, but later on it all turned into politics. When media attention grew, also internationally, another group came in. When the other group was set up in the same Abuja and they came to attack people who were fighting for the same cause. It was said that the government, in order to disperse the initial campaigners of "Bring Back Our Girls", accused the opposition of having set up these people in order to bring the attention to Nigeria, about the situation of this Boko Haram. Therefore I said it was a good initiative but it turned into politics.

These girls' lives have been destroyed, even if you bring them back now. Where are they going to start? They have been tormented. I think they will never go to school again because they believe, if they go to school, the same thing will happen to them again. So where is the education we have been fighting for?

**Bashir Alhaji-Sheu:** When we talk about Boko Haram, there are so many questions and answers, but I see two important realities. There is what the media, what the government believes in and there is reality on ground, what people are facing, are suffering. There are two different realities. After the killing of Mohammed Yusuf, the founder of Boko Haram, and when Shekau came into power, violence affected everyone, whether you were Muslim or Christian. But a lot of things are happening and people on the ground can easily say this is done by Boko Haram. Kidnapping, okay, for

kidnappings they are responsible. Do not forget that all these things did not happen overnight. They have been happening for a long time, even before Boko Haram, but it has not received any attention.

At the beginning people sympathized with Boko Haram. At the beginning, people sympathized, because when they started, they started preaching. When they were preaching, they did not carry guns. They did not kill anybody. They hid themselves. You know, gathering themselves. But what happened? The immediate cause of the violence is from the government and the security forces.

I remember, I read about Mohammed Yusuf, that one day he went to the commandant in the barracks. The commandant was surprised to see him and asked him: "What are you doing here?" He said: "I came to ask for a favor". There was the rule that no motorbike is allowed to carry more than two people. Mohammed Yusuf said that his students are very poor and that Friday between two to seven they should be allowed on the motorbike. He got permission. He was cooperating with the authorities, but what happened? His men were killed in broad daylight; nineteen people were shot dead. That was a genesis. People sympathized with them at the beginning.

**Gerald Hainzl:** About the question referring to China and Saudi Arabia... I picked China because I mainly choose countries that either joined the conference in Paris or are somehow affected. If it all came down to certain interests, you would need to ask, what are the interests of France in this region right now? What interests does the United Kingdom have in this region? What kind of interests does the European Union most likely have? Think about gas supply for example. Of course there are states in the Persian Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia and Kata, which are responsible for the funding of several of those groups. If you would like to discuss this issue in a bigger context, you have to bear these states in mind. One big missing one used to be the African Union and the affected regional organizations, which I already mentioned briefly. To find a solution each one of the affected states needs to work together, also those that are financing various groups.

**Rüdiger Lohlker:** Concerning the Nigerian government's behavior, the missing actions from the Nigerian state result from inner political considerations. Think about the launch of Islamic law. Of course there are political powers that are using this discourse for political intentions and to profit from it. This is why no action happens fast. On the other hand, you need to bear in mind the members of each elite within this battle are Islamic symbols. It is not about religion but about identity. So it is not a religious concern at all.

Another important thing would be to close down the financial resources. The problem is that we do not really know who is financing everything. Should the French government be accused because they are paying the ransom for a hostage? I am not sure if there might be a conference in Paris on this issue. I don't think so. Then you've got all these welfare groups or charities in the Persian Gulf that are very engaged. The truth is, it takes years to find out which interests are beneath everything. That is kind of a long-term process. I am worried that it all comes down to this "war on terror" discourse. People from every country are concerned by the "war on terror" and suffer from it. The only ones that win are the producers of unmanned aerial vehicles. Boko Haram is going to stay in this region.

They will not get in the way of Al-Qaida in the Islam Maghreb, and they will not spread to eastern Africa. Nevertheless, this fear is part of the “war on terror” discourse, meaning it is stylized to be a global Islamic terrorist danger. We experienced that in Mali, where it also wasn’t actually the case. We should think about that...



**Audience:** Recently, there was an attack in Bauchi State. It was a woman having some explosives on her body. A military man died with her. But I think there have been minimal cases of direct involvement of women making a Boko Haram attack.

**Audience:** You said before that parents send out their children and then they become soldiers for Boko Haram. We have a similar problem other countries where children lost their parents and they became violent. Is this the plan of Boko Haram now, that they want to do the same to the girls and to block them from education?

**Bashir Alhaji-Sheu:** No, that is not the purpose.

**Audience:** What are the possibilities of America, France, Austria, Europe and others? Can the international community really do something in Nigeria? I have my doubts about all these conferences.

**Gerald Hainzl:** It is yes and no. You know, there are fields where cooperation makes sense. But on the other hand, there are fields where it would be better to leave it to the Africans to find their own solutions, through negotiation or mediation, something where we just can assist. On the other hand we can also provide some of our own experiences from Europe.

**Audience:** I will make one statement and maybe ask one question. I believe – and I say probably because I am not really sure what was there at the beginning – Boko Haram started maybe as a religious organization, but today it is a business.

My question is: We are discussing this issue and I want to know as a member of the civil society, what shall we do or what can we do to actually to slow down this process and make sure that security is actually taken seriously. The lack of security affects business and education.

**Audience:** I want to know what are the solutions, because from what you said we cannot crush down Boko Haram through a violent approach – or should we? There are issues of education, the lack of economic opportunities in northern Nigeria. What are the ideas of the panelists?

**Bashi Alhaji-Sheu:** I think the problem is with the system. If we cannot address the system, I think we cannot move forward. In addressing the system I strongly, I strongly recommend that Nigeria should

take the issue of education very seriously. Not only Western education, since that region has spread dominantly Muslims. The northern schools, especially from primary to secondary schools should have a mix of Islamic and Western education. When people know that when you go to school you will get two educations, their kids will come. Secondly, I think anybody who has been to northern Nigeria knows that it is a vast land, a very vast land. But there is no government which invests in education, in equipment, which brings experts to train the people. That is the whole issue. Thank you.

**Gerald Hainzl:** I think the civil society should think about the situation, continue to engage itself with this subject, and find out what the Nigerian government is doing, as well as what is happening in this



region. Finally I would like to quote the British philosopher Daniel Dennett, who said, “there is a simple solution to every problem and it is wrong”.

**Zainab Ahmed Mohammed:** To me, special security is very important. In society you have to bring everybody in the system, so that everybody feels that he or she belongs to that country. Let them feel that the resources and that the resolutions that are made do not remain just on paper. They should really be implemented. Women should be given means to defend women against domestic violence, Nigerian women have suffered domestically and no woman has the right to go to court.

**Rüdiger Lohlker:** I completely agree with all the other speakers. So it is empowering women, investing in education and do not think about simple solutions.

**Teclaire Ngo Tam:** Thank you very much. So, we take with us: address the system and education, not only the Western education, promote every culture, observe the developments and promote social inclusion. Thank for attending this event, thank you for listening and for your contributions.