



**Spaces for Youth Development and Social Change**

# **Spaces for Change (S4C)**

**Press Statement | July 8, 2013**

## **JUSTICE NOW!!! FOR VICTIMS OF YOBE SCHOOL MASSACRE**

Spaces for Youth Development and Social Change (SPACES FOR CHANGE) condemns in very strong terms, the gruesome killing of 29 pupils and a teacher at a school in Mamudo town, Yobe State, allegedly perpetrated by an Islamist terror group popularly known as Boko Haram. According to news reports today, the death toll has risen to 45! Spaces for Change considers the latest incident as a monumental threat to national peace and security. More so, it constitutes a gross and systematic violation of the right to life which has disproportionately targeted harmless young people for several months. Not only that, we are deeply saddened that these escalating attacks are happening at a time the Federal Government has declared a state of emergency in Yobe and other states in North East Nigeria.

While the wanton killings escalate, we express profound dismay that the Federal government is continuing to fail in its primary obligation to safeguard the lives, movement and properties of its citizens, and especially protect the youth populations from these willful aberrations. As one of the three heavily-militarized states where a state of emergency was imposed recently, the ease with which the Yobe killings were carried out puts a question mark on the progress of military actions in the volatile areas. Again, the intensity and gravity of the continuing terror attacks raises further doubts whether the amnesty offer which the Federal Government recently extended to members of the terrorist sect was really necessary.

The Yobe State government has reacted to the mass killings by ordering the immediate closure of all schools in the state. By this directive, the education of youths and school children has been seriously disrupted, with grave impacts on the full realization of the right to education as guaranteed by the Nigerian 1999 Constitution and Article 17 of the African Charter. In the instant matter, the abrupt closure of schools necessitated by the security crisis has taken away the opportunity of school children to gain primary and secondary education, fundamental prerequisites for full civic participation.

The gruesome killing of 29 pupils in Yobe State reinforces Spaces for Change's research finding that North East Nigeria is now among the most dangerous places in the world to be a youth. The study, *Demolishing Foundations of Peace* found that "from Borno, to Kano, Jos, and Bauchi, young people have been disproportionately targeted with violence by both the Nigerian security forces and the Islamic insurgency group. Just last Independence Day, 46 students were massacred in Mubi Polytechnic, Adamawa State when gunmen wearing military uniforms invaded the students' off campus hostels in the



# **Spaces for Change (S4C)**

town under curfew. Till date, the victims' identities remain largely uncovered and no one has been held accountable.

We take the view that lack of accountability in the handling of the security crisis in northern Nigeria poses a major obstacle to the efforts to restore normalcy and lasting peace in the region. The failure of the Nigerian authorities to address the legacy of past human rights violations by both its military forces and the insurgents offers little hope that such violations will never be repeated and prevents victims and survivors from reconciling and rebuilding their lives.

We urge the Nigerian government to immediately conduct a high-level and thorough investigation into this incident and other similar killings in northern Nigeria in order to identify and appropriately punish those responsible, and ensure victims receive adequate compensation. If these acts are not properly addressed, the crisis will escalate and may well establish a breeding ground for recurring violence against young people, undermining fundamental democratic values and freedoms.

We offer our condolences to the families of those killed and injured in the attack and urge for greater protection of the lives of young citizens across the country.

Established in May 2011, Spaces for Change (S4C) is a non-profit, human rights organization working to infuse human rights into social and economic decision-making processes and platforms in Nigeria. Using the human rights framework and youth-centered strategies, the organization creates spaces for the often-excluded young people, marginalized groups and communities to become active participants in public decision making, and strong advocates of social and economic justice.

Signed:

Victoria Ohaeri  
Executive Director  
SPACES FOR CHANGE