



## An Easter Reflection on Nigeria

For most of us Easter week was full of reflection, preparation, and celebration as we experienced again the sorrow, pain, expectation, and exaltation that is part of Holy Week and Easter Sunday. We remember again the great sacrifice God made for us in the person of his son Jesus who gave his life for us and rose from the dead that we too may have everlasting life if we follow him. Out of his great pain has come great joy – Christ is Risen; He is Risen Indeed!

Part of the call to follow the risen Christ is to be one with all our brothers and sisters in their times of joy and of sorrow; to share their pain and live with them in hope. For our brothers and sisters in Nigeria, Holy Week and Easter have again been celebrated in the midst of the ongoing nightmare of violence and now also of famine. The violence is in its eighth year. Though outright ‘battles’ have decreased, the kidnappings, village raids, and suicide bombings continue. Thousands remain displaced; thousands are dead or missing; burned out villages dot the country side; farm fields lie fallow. . . . The resulting disruption in agriculture is a major factor contributing to famine. UNICEF reports that in Nigeria’s Borno state alone, 244,000 children will suffer from severe malnutrition in 2017. The UN reports more than 20 million people in South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, and northeastern Nigeria are facing famine – the worst in 70 years. . . .

Northeastern Nigeria is home for many of our EYN (the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) brothers and sisters. Their plight came close to our hearts in 2014 when 276 girls, many of them from EYN, were abducted by Boko Haram from their government school in Chibok (a school originally started by the Brethren). We have also received devastating reports of churches burned; EYN facilities and schools raided; members and pastors killed. Most EYN leaders have themselves lost homes, friends; loved ones . . .

We know our EYN Brothers and Sisters are people of strong faith and we know they live in the hope that comes through the resurrection of Jesus. We saw their faith in the faces and could hear it in the voices of the women’s choir that came to share their story and their faith with us in 2015. We can only try to imagine the sorrow and pain of those who have suffered loss including those for whom Good Friday (April 14) marked the third anniversary of the Chibok girl’s kidnapping. 193 of those girls are still missing. 57 escaped during the first 24 hours of the abduction. 26 more have escaped or have been ‘freed’ since May of 2016 but they too may not all be home. The 26 were under “house arrest” by their own government after escaping/being freed. Their plight, and that of their families, seems over-whelming, yet these girls are only a few among thousands. . . .

With our own Easter celebration fresh in our minds, let us not forget Christ’s call to love one another; to lift up our Nigerian brothers and sisters in prayer; and to give whatever help we can to those in need. Remember the powerful fact that, in Nigeria, EYN just celebrated Easter too and is living out Christ’s calling as well by reaching out to those in need including their Muslim neighbors who are also suffering at the hands of Boko Haram. Moreover, do not forget in Nigeria, *brothers and sisters are praying for us as well!*

LLF April 20, 2017

---

### Sources & Resources:

For more information on the ongoing situation in Nigeria go to the Church of the brethren *Newsline* at [brethren.org](http://brethren.org); for more on Brethren efforts to help and IF YOU WANT TO HELP go to [www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis](http://www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis). Church of the Brethren *Newsline* did a special issue on Good Friday April 14, 2017 on Nigeria and on the Coptic Church in Egypt which is also dealing with violence. Included in it is **information on how to urge the U.S. government to be more proactive in addressing the famine** in Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia, and Yemen. An April 14, 2017 *Newsline* article cited a March 18 article written by Dionne Searcey and Ashley Gilbertson of the New York Times, titled “Beneath Mask of Normal Life, Young Lives Scarred by Boko Haram.” It tells the stories of several children and teens abducted by Boko Haram. See [www.nytimes.com/2017/03/18/world/africa/boko-haram-nigeria-child-soldiers.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/18/world/africa/boko-haram-nigeria-child-soldiers.html). With that article are links to several more New York Times articles about the situation in Nigeria. There is an insightful article about Boko Haram by Charles Kwuelum. He is a Nigerian man now working in Washington, D.C., who grew up in the neighborhood of young men who joined the Nigerian insurgent group. The article, published by Sojourners, is recommended by the Church of the Brethren Office of Public Witness. Find it at <https://sojo.net/magazine/march-2017/my-neighbor-boko-haram>.