

Congressional Testimony of Deborah Peter

**ON BOKO HARAM: THE GROWING THREAT TO SCHOOLGIRLS,
NIGERIA, AND BEYOND**

Before the

Committee on Foreign Affairs

U.S. House of Representatives

May 21, 2014

MY STORY

My name is Deborah Peter and I am the sole survivor of a Boko Haram attack on my household.

On December 22, 2011 at 7 pm, my brother and I were at home when we started hearing some guns shooting. My brother called my dad and told him not to come home because some people were shooting guns. But my dad said he should not worry because it was not the first time he had come home when people were fighting. When my dad came home, he said that he was going to take a shower because he was hot.

At 7:30 pm, three men knocked on the door. My brother answered the door because he recognized one of the men as a Muslim in our community. The men asked where my dad was and I told them that he was in the shower. The men waited. After three minutes, they went into the bathroom and dragged my dad into the main room. They said that my dad was wasting their time and that they did not have time to wait on him. The men told my dad that he should deny his Christian faith. My dad told them that he would not deny his faith. They said that if he did not deny his faith they were going to kill him. My dad refused, saying that Jesus said whoever acknowledges Him in front of man, He will acknowledge in front of God; and whoever denies Him in front of man, He will deny in front of God in heaven. My dad said that he would rather die than go to hell fire. After he told the men that, the men shot him three times in his chest.

My brother was in shock. He started demanding, "What did my dad do to you? Why did you shoot him?" The men told him to be quiet or else they were going to shoot him too. Then, the men discussed whether they should kill my brother. One of the Boko Harams said they should kill Caleb, my brother. The second man said that he was just a boy and that he was too young to kill. But the third man said that they should make an exception in this case because Caleb will only grow up to be a Christian pastor. Caleb asked me to plead with them for his life but they told me to shut up or they would kill me too. The leader agreed that they should kill him and shot my brother two times. My dad had still been breathing but when he saw them shoot Caleb, he died.

My brother fell down but was still alive and gasping. The men shot him in his mouth. Then, my brother stopped moving and died. I was in shock. I did not know what was happening. The men put me in the middle of my dad and brother's corpses, told me to be quiet or be killed, and left me there. I stayed there until the next day when the army came. They removed my dad and brother's bodies to the mortuary and took me to the hospital.

I was traumatized. A nearby pastor paid for me to get out of town when he discovered that Boko Haram said they made a mistake by not also killing me. Boko Haram decided later that they should have killed me because I am the daughter of an apostate Muslim mother who converted to Christianity. So the pastor paid for me to get out of that region. I fled and Jubilee Campaign helped me come to a 9/11 child survivors of terrorism camp in America. On May 15, 2013, that pastor, Rev Faye Pama, was killed by Boko Haram in front of his kids.

Similar to that pastor, my family was targeted by Boko Haram because we are Christians. My dad was a pastor. We had to move from place to place because Boko Haram always attacked my father and told him that they would kill him. In November, they burned his church and threatened him. My dad refused to deny his faith and rebuilt his church. That is why they killed him—because he is a Christian.

I decided to tell the world my story when the Chibok girls were taken because everyone needs to know how horrible Boko Haram is. They kill innocent people who never hurt them. I want the world to understand what happened to me. I hope that the kidnapped Chibok girls will take courage from my story, and know more of what God says, and know what it means to stand strong in the face of bad people. I hope that they will be free and be able to go to school and worship freely. I hope that like me, some of them can come and continue their education in America.

My mum graduated from the school from which they were kidnapped. Chibok is a small town where everyone is related to everyone else and although it is majority Christian, everyone lived in peace until Boko Haram came. I know at least one of the kidnapped school girls named Hauwa. I pray for them and ask everyone to pray for them too.

I am thankful to Tuesday's Children, the 911 Foundation for inviting me to a summer camp for child survivors of terrorism, I am thankful to Jubilee Campaign for bringing me to America and I am thankful to Mt Mission School for giving me a chance to continue my education and being a home to me in America.

Thank you.