



August 10, 2021

H.E. Dr. Michelle Bachelet
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais Wilson
Quai Wilson 47
CH-1201 Geneva, Switzerland
(via email: mbachelet@ohchr.org)

Subject: Kidnapping of school children in Uvira/Fizi, Democratic Republic of Congo

Dear Madame High Commissioner,

The International Alliance of Women is an international non-governmental organization that works to promote women's human rights around the world, focusing particularly on empowerment of women and development issues and more broadly on gender equality.

With horror, allies of women's and children's rights defenders have learned that in the town of Uvira, located in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo in the province of South Kivu, more than 8 cases of schoolchildren, who were on their way to or from school, have been abducted and killed. Some of the perpetrators demand a ransom of up to \$5,000 per child from the parents of these victims in order to free them. Others mutilate their genitals and other organs for reasons unknown.

The most recent case of abduction occurred on July 24, 2021, in the territory of Fizi, Ngandja sector, Nguma, where a 12-year-old girl named Mwavita Chakubuta was abducted, one of the children for whom the Association for the Support of Vulnerable Women and Children, ADA-FEV, assumes schooling responsibilities. The victim was leaving for school at 7 a.m. with her family, less than three kilometers from her home, when they encountered their unidentified attackers. So far, the investigation continues in vain.

The reports indicate the abducted children are victims of corporal torture, rape, deprived of food and care, and almost all of them die because of the suffering and inhuman conditions they are being subjected to.

In view of the above, the children living in these areas live in constant fear for their wellbeing. The International Alliance of Women stands in solidarity with the Association for the Support of Vulnerable Women and Children, ADAFEV, in asking the Congolese government and non-governmental organizations for security and protection of human rights and to combine their efforts in order to put an end to this barbarism which traumatizes the general population and deprives children of education.

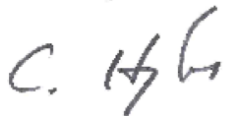
The most acute stress on physical and mental health is felt in vulnerable countries where women and girls are not protected from human rights violations. The International Alliance of Women stresses the importance of immediate action by UN member states to address the lawless atrocities committed against women and children in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Situations such as those described above cannot continue to occur with impunity. State and non-state actors must therefore be held accountable for these human rights violations.

The International Alliance of Women has confidence in the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' office to pursue blatant attacks on human rights and is aware of your commitment to address any disregard of justice. We remain at your disposal and thank you in advance for your attention to this urgent situation.

Please accept, Madame High Commissioner, the expression of our highest regard for your work. We look forward to your communication on the steps your office has taken regarding this case.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Hayles
President
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