

**MR EDWARD KALLON
THE HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR IN NIGERIA**

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STATEMENT ON THE KILLING OF AID WORKERS IN BORNO STATE

Abuja, 22 July 2020

I am utterly shocked and horrified by the gruesome killing of some of our colleagues and partners by non-state armed groups in Borno State. My most heartfelt condolences go to their loved ones, families, friends and co-workers.

They were committed humanitarians who devoted their lives to helping vulnerable people and communities in an area heavily affected by violence.

Our colleagues and partners were abducted while travelling on a main route connecting the northern town of Monguno with Maiduguri, the Borno State capital. Their safety and securing their safe release have been our highest priority since they were captured last month.

I strongly condemn all violence targeting aid workers and the civilians they are assisting. I am also troubled by the number of illegal vehicular checkpoints set up by non-state armed groups along main supply routes. These checkpoints disrupt the delivery of life-saving assistance and heighten the risks for civilians of being abducted, killed or injured, with aid workers increasingly being singled out.

This is tragically not the first killing of kidnapped aid workers. We have repeatedly called for such devastating fate and blatant violation of international humanitarian law to never happen again. And yet, it does. I implore all armed parties to step up to their responsibilities and stop targeting aid workers and civilians.

Aid workers and the assistance they provide to the most vulnerable populations make the difference between life and death for entire communities. Nearly eight million people were in need of urgent life-saving assistance in north-east Nigeria at the beginning of the year. Today, 10.6 million people need urgent support as conflict-affected states battle the COVID-19 pandemic.

At a time when humanitarian needs have reached unprecedented levels, it is unacceptable that those who are trying to help are being attacked and killed. This incident will not deter the international community from providing aid to millions of Nigerians who desperately need assistance in the north-east. The humanitarian community stands in solidarity with the people of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states who have suffered long years of conflict and now need protection against a deadly virus.

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