

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

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STATEMENT ON ATTACK IN DAMASAK, DAMAGE TO AID HELICOPTER

Abuja, 4 July 2020

I am gravely concerned by reports of another violent attack by non-state armed groups in Damasak, Borno State, on 2 July, in which at least two innocent civilians lost their lives, including a five-year old child. Several others were injured, and a humanitarian helicopter was hit, sustaining serious damage.

I extend my sincere condolences to the families of the civilians who lost their lives in the attack and wish a prompt recovery to those injured.

I welcome the Government commitment to investigate the attack and swiftly bring to justice the perpetrators.

I deplore that a UN Humanitarian Air Service helicopter was hit by bullets during the attack. No aid workers were on board at the time and crew members are all safe. My thoughts are also with the crew and I commend them for piloting the chopper back to safety during this critical situation.

The attack and damage to the helicopter severely affects the ability of aid actors to provide urgently needed assistance to vulnerable people in remote areas across Borno State.

The UN Humanitarian Air Service is essential to evacuate wounded civilians and remains the backbone to facilitating humanitarian access, thereby enabling UN agencies and non-governmental organizations to safely and securely reach the most vulnerable populations. In 2019, UNHAS transported 66,271 passengers and 147 megatons of humanitarian assistance, as well as conducted 30 medical and 70 security evacuations.

I strongly condemn any attack against civilians, humanitarian assets or aid workers and call on all armed parties to respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and ensure the protection of civilians, humanitarian property and personnel. I furthermore call on all parties to allow and facilitate safe and unimpeded access for humanitarians to deliver life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable people in the north-east.

Insecurity and violent attacks continue to hamper the ability of people to access basic services or livelihoods and recover from the protracted crisis in north-east Nigeria. The United Nations and NGO partners are working to bring life-saving assistance to 7.8 million people in the crisis-affected states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states, many of them in remote areas.

I call on the Nigerian authorities to reinforce the safety and security of all humanitarian workers.

For further information, please contact:

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