



The Chibok Girls: The Boko Haram Kidnappings and Islamist Militancy in Nigeria

By Helon Habila



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"In rescuing the Chibok tragedy from 'mythic status,' Habila's unusual primer quietly yet powerfully revives the call to take notice."--*The Atlantic*

On April 14, 2014, 276 girls from the Chibok Secondary School in northern Nigeria were kidnapped by Boko Haram, the world's deadliest terrorist group. Most were never heard from again. Acclaimed Nigerian novelist Helon Habila, who grew up in northern Nigeria, returned to Chibok and gained intimate access to the families of the kidnapped to offer a devastating account of this tragedy that stunned the world. With compassion and deep understanding of historical context, Habila tells the stories of the girls and the anguish of their parents; chronicles the rise of Boko Haram and the Nigerian government's inept response; and captures the indifference of the media and the international community whose attention has moved on.

Employing a fiction writer's sensibility and a journalist's curiosity, *THE CHIBOK GIRLS* provides poignant portraits of everyday Nigerians whose lives have been transformed by extremist forces. Habila illuminates the long history of colonialism--and unmasks cultural and religious dynamics--that gave rise to the conflicts that have ravaged the region to this day.

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Bibliography

- Rank: #74469 in Books
- Brand: Habila Helon
- Published on: 2016-12-05
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.40" h x .40" w x 4.90" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 128 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"This is a controlled, lucid and deeply felt account of Boko Haram's unconscionable kidnappings. This is essential to understanding the tragedy of the Chibok girls." -- Dave Eggers, author of *What is the What* and *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*

"In rescuing the Chibok tragedy from 'mythic status,' Habila's unusual primer quietly yet powerfully revives the call to take notice." - *The Atlantic*

"Habila's account is a fascinating portrait of a community stricken by tragedy and ill-served by successive governments in Abuja." -- *Financial Times*

"In this brief yet powerful book, novelist Helon Habila returns to Nigeria, the country of his birth, to explore the kidnapping in April 2014 of 276 girls from a secondary school in Chibok, in the northeastern state of Borno...A memorable portrait of individual resilience in a divided, strife-torn nation." -- *the Guardian*

"There's nothing more informative about one of Africa's most troubled states in the past half dozen years than Helon Habila's *The Chibok Girls*. The slim little book was written by the award-winning Nigerian novelist who was born in the area and-- although he lives in the U.S.--returned to the war-torn northeastern area of his country, where he conducted interviews (including with three of the escaped abducted girls) and, then, placed his conclusions within the context of Nigeria's post-Independence history. The result is a damning picture of Nigeria's failed leadership, ethnic tensions, and squandered oil wealth, one of the saddest stories of post-colonialism and--in a disturbing way-- a warning for other nations (including the United States) to get their act together." -- *Counterpunch*

"This engaging book reminds us of how ordinary the horror of war can be." -- Kwame Dawes, Emmy award-winning poet, actor, musician and author of *Bob Marley: Lyrical Genius*

"Nigerian-born poet and novelist Habila seeks to remind the global community of the plight of the kidnapped girls...an informative primer on Nigeria's history of Islamist conflict and a passionate testimonial on behalf of the 218 Chibok girls still missing."

--*Kirkus Reviews*

"A dispatch from the front lines....Habila incorporates vital background knowledge on the situation in Chibok and the surrounding area; as a poet, he adds sensitivity and eloquence, capturing the raw emotion of the wounded town."

--*Publishers Weekly*

"Helon Habila tells us a heartbreaking story about lives lost in anguish. His book will spread the pain and sorrow of the vanquished Chibok women, not to keep us crying, but to energize us to be part of a path that leads to the rescue."

-- Toyin Falola, Past President, African Studies Association, and Kluge Chair of the Countries and Cultures of the South, Library of Congress

About the Author

Helon Habila was born in Nigeria and is the author of three novels, *Oil on Water*, *Measuring Time*, and *Waiting for an Angel*. His fiction, poems and short stories have won many honors and awards, including the Commonwealth Prize for Best First Novel (Africa Section), the Virginia Library Foundation's fiction award, and the Windham-Campbell Prize. Habila's short story, "The Hotel Malogo" won the Emily Balch Prize. *Oil on Water*, which deals with environmental pollution in the oil rich Niger Delta, was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers Prize (2011), the Orion Book Award (2012), and the PEN/Open Book Award (2012).

He worked in Lagos as a journalist before moving to England in 2002. He co-edited the British Council's anthology, *New Writing 14* and edited *The Granta Book of African Short Story* in 2011. He is currently an Associate Professor of Creative Writing at George Mason University and lives in Virginia with his wife and three children.

Users Review

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