

## UN, Red Cross demand justice as Boko Haram kills aid worker

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The United Nations Humanitarian Office in Nigeria has condemned the execution of one of the six aid workers abducted in July by Boko Haram and their Islamic State West African Province collaborators demanding the release of other hostages and “to ensure the perpetrators are brought to justice”.

The insurgents in a video uploaded by a Nigerian journalist familiar with the Lake Chad crisis, Mr Ahmad Salkida, on Wednesday, showed how the male humanitarian worker was beheaded.

Salkida said the insurgents had also threatened to execute the remaining aid workers.

He said, “The group, in a horrific video of the execution, said it took the action because the government deceived them following months of what is now known as secret negotiations between a team of intermediaries and unnamed officials.

“ISWAP has also threatened to execute the other remaining staff of the International Non-Governmental Organisation. Recall the organisation was declared persona non grata last week by the Nigerian Army for aiding terrorism in the North-East, but the organisation denied the allegation.

“This morning, the military has reportedly shut down the office of another international organisation, Mercy Corps, in Maiduguri. The humanitarian space in the Lake Chad is not only shrinking, it is turning hostile for all the actors and the people in need of aid will be at the receiving end of this.”

The aid workers were abducted after Boko Haram fighters attacked their convoy in Damasak, Borno State, killing one of the drivers, identified as Kashim Ritam.

The abductees included an employee of a non-profit organisation, Action Against Hunger, two drivers and three health workers.

In a statement, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria, Mr Edward Kallon, said, “The UN calls on authorities to ensure the perpetrators are brought to justice. The UN also calls for the immediate release of all aid workers who are still in captivity.

“I am also extremely concerned about the increasingly dangerous and restrictive operating environment for implementing humanitarian assistance in crisis-affected areas, where humanitarian aid workers continue to face challenges as they strive to deliver urgent, life-saving assistance.

“I renew the call for all parties to the conflict to ensure the protection of aid workers and to respect international humanitarian law according to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality.

“The humanitarian community in Nigeria is working in line with the 2019-2021 Humanitarian Response Strategy, jointly agreed with the Government of Nigeria, to provide life-saving assistance to 6.2 million of the most vulnerable people in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states.”

The International Committee of the Red Cross also condemned the execution, calling for the release of other aid workers still in captivity.

The ICRC said under the international humanitarian law “all parties to an armed conflict must spare people not taking part in the hostilities”.

The Head of ICRC Delegation in Nigeria, Eloi Fillion, said, “We are devastated by this tragic outcome. Our thoughts are with the families, friends, and colleagues of Action Against Hunger at this incredibly difficult time.

“We urge those still holding the members of the humanitarian mission who were kidnapped in July: release them. They are not part of the fight. They are humanitarian workers and health professionals.”

Action Against Hunger on its website on Wednesday also confirmed the killing of an aid worker by the insurgents, but could not confirm whether he was its employee.

The organisation said, “Action Against Hunger condemns in the strongest terms this assassination and urgently calls for the release of the hostages, reminding them that they were present in the North-East only to help the most vulnerable.”