

RESOLUTION ON THE ABDUCTION OF SCHOOL-AGED GIRLS

Violence against women and girls has long threatened freedom of expression, and the wider global context of gender inequality continues to be a very serious threat to the participation of women and girls in literature, and to the education and literacy of girls.

In particular, the abduction of school-aged girls is an ongoing global issue and – as well as being an act of gender-based violence in and of itself – typically marks the end of an individual's education: prohibiting her participation in, contribution to, and access to global literature both as a reader and a writer.

Recent examples of this include:

- The Chibok schoolgirls kidnapping by Boko Haram in Nigeria in 2014;
- Ongoing mass abductions of Yazidi girls by the group calling itself Islamic State in Iraq;
- The continued disappearances of indigenous girls in Canada and the west of the United States;
- Abductions of school-aged girls in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, who since 2012 have been more specifically targeted on their journeys to and from school.

It is very difficult to find global statistics on child abduction, as there seems to be very little recognition or understanding around this issue. Nonetheless, compelling evidence – both anecdotal and reported – shows that the abduction of school-aged girls is a serious and growing issue in many countries. The impact of this violence interacts with an ongoing silencing of the voices and narratives of the girls and women affected; the curtailing of their educations; and an exclusion from all the opportunities that come with education and literacy. The climate of fear created by this situation poses a further threat to other female students for whom the risk of abduction may be a prohibiting factor in their own choice or opportunity to attend school.

The first step in tackling this is acknowledging, researching, and documenting these cases. Work must also be done to further understand the impact that the abduction of school-aged girls has on:

- Preventing the advancement of gender equality, thereby inhibiting the free expression of women and girls.
- Preventing access for girls to quality education and education equality, thereby inhibiting the participation of women and girls in global literature.

Both of these issues – gender equality and access to education – are priorities in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Assembly of Delegates of PEN International, meeting at its 82nd World Congress in Ourense, Galicia (Spain), 26th September to 2nd October 2016, calls on all governments:

- To gather statistics on the abductions of girls and to evaluate the impact such abductions have on the education of girls;
- To generate more advanced global consciousness and understanding of this issue through research.

The Assembly of Delegates of PEN International also calls on UN Women:

- To act as a global leader in this research and to prioritise combatting the abduction of girls in their activities.

