



Leah Sharibu: Example of Courage and Steadfastness to Faith

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ABUJA, NIGERIA -

The story of Leah Sharibu, the 15-year-old Christian girl who is yet to be released by Boko Haram has caught our attention. Leah was among the abducted 110 Dapchi School girls but she was reportedly not among the 104 recently freed by the insurgents. She was reportedly held back, because she refused to renounce her Christian faith.

In an interview, Leah's father, Nata Sharibu, was quoted as saying: "All of them were released. They said some were dead there and my daughter is alive but they cannot release her because she is a Christian. "They gave her the option of converting in order to be released but she said she will never become a Muslim. I am very sad but I am also jubilating too because my daughter did not denounce her faith. "

This is indeed a mixed story of faith, as well as a sad commentary on how religion has often been used as a tool of division by many for their own selfish purposes.

Leah must be commended for her heroism and courageous act exhibited before her abductors. At no time is the beauty and essence of Christianity better manifested than in this exemplary life of faith. For refusing to succumb to the intimation of Boko-haram abductors, Leah has followed the example of Jesus, the Messiah and Saviour, whose passion, death and resurrection we celebrate this period of Easter.

We equally thank the parents of Leah for bringing up their daughter in a truly Christian way with love and fear of God over the fear of man; and commend their fortitude in bearing the present predicament of their daughter. This exemplary family life should be a lesson worthy of emulation by all Nigerian families and communities irrespective of religious affinity.

The 15-year old Leah has indeed become a symbol of the sufferings, persecutions, challenges and intimidations Christians face daily in Nigeria for expressing their faith especially in public.

As recently declared by Bishop Mathew Hassan Kukah of Sokoto, in his homily at the burial of late Bishop Joseph Bagobiri of Kafanchan diocese: “As it is with the history of our faith, these are no easy times to be a Christian anywhere in the world especially here in Nigeria. There is staggering but also verifiable evidence that Christians are today the most persecuted set of people anywhere in the world. Today, Christians are still faced with the challenges of proclaiming their Gospel in an environment that remains quite hostile to the Christian Message. Yet, as St. Paul said to Timothy: We must preach the Gospel, welcome or unwelcome (2 Tim. 4:2).”

We use this medium to appeal to the Federal Government to go the extra miles in re-negotiating the unconditional release of Leah without further delay. We must remember that this is a secular country and the government has the responsibility of ensuring the safety of every Nigerian irrespective of religious, political and ethnic differences.

At the long run, everyone in Nigeria, both Christians and Muslims alike, have much to learn from a deeply courageous 15 year old Christian girl from Dapchi about what it means to be loyal to one's faith and to be faithful to one's God even in the face of adversity.

Rev. Ralph Madu

Secretary General

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