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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.


[12 May 2017]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Protection of the civilian population in the fight against Boko Haram

Society for Threatened Peoples demands more respect for civilian population in the struggle against Boko Haram – as well as sustainable measures against the causes of violence. The terrible fate of the Chibok girls is symptomatic for the situation of the entire civilian population in northeastern Nigeria, which is being crushed between Boko Haram's terror and the countermeasures of the armed forces. Also, the terrorists continue to capture civilians – most recently, in the beginning of April, 22 more girls and women. The fact that it is still possible to abduct women from villages near Chibok is a clear sign that Nigeria's strategy will not lead to lasting peace.

The STP is concerned about the fact that the United States of America government signed off on selling up to twelve A-29 Super Tucano combat aircraft to Nigeria on Tuesday. They are to be used in the fight against Boko Haram. With these new combat aircraft, the Nigerian Air Force will be even more focused on land bombardment of regions and villages where Boko-Haram fighters are suspected. This is a great danger for all those who were dragged off by the terrorist group, as well as for the civilian population living in their sphere of influence.

The controversial aircraft deal had been suspended by the Obama administration after, in January 2017, the Nigerian Air Force had inadvertently attacked a refugee camp in which relief supplies had been distributed at that moment. More than 90 civilians had lost their lives in the attack. According to Nigeria's air force, more than 2,100 air raids against Boko Haram were carried out in 2016. For years, human rights organizations have been accusing the Nigerian army of not doing enough to protect the civilian population in the struggle against the terrorist group.

Accidental bombing of refugee camp in Nigeria

There should be independent and transparent investigations into the accidental bombing of a refugee camp in Nigeria, which had claimed far more victims than originally published. Most recently, Babagana Malarima, Head of the affected district, mentioned that 234 people had been buried at cemeteries in the city of Rann following the bombing of the refugee camp. Babagana Malarima is head of the district Kala Balge, to which the city Rann belongs. On January 17, 2017, a combat aircraft of the Nigerian Air Force had accidentally dropped two bombs on a refugee camp located on the outskirts of the city. At first, it was assumed that about 50 to 70 people had lost their lives in the bombing.

The spokesman of the Ministry of Defense, Brigadier-General Rabe Abubakar, had commented on the new numbers of victims by stating that it was "not so important" whether a single person or a million people had lost their lives – but that what mattered is that all of the victims were Nigerians and that they must be commemorated. Anyone who thinks it's enough to commemorate the victims instead of taking adequate measures to protect the civilian population in the struggle against the terror organization Boko Haram has apparently not learned anything from the fatal failure of the Nigerian armed forces.

The number of civilian casualties caused by hundreds of air raids on inhabited villages and presumed positions of Boko Haram in Nigeria is an unknown parameter in the anti-terror measures in the West African country. For the most part, the authorities don't allow humanitarian organizations, journalists, or human rights activists to access the embattled areas. Due to their arbitrariness, many of the civilian people fear the Nigerian security forces just as much as the Boko Haram fighters.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the Human Rights Council to urge the government of Nigeria to:

- Respect human rights and protect the civilian population in the fight against Boko Haram.