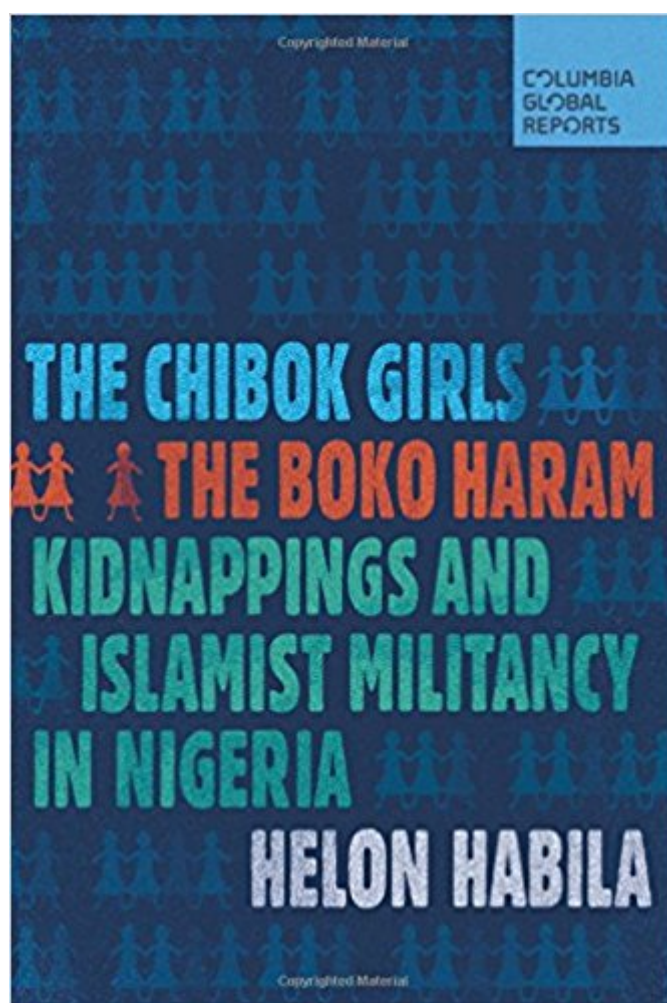


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# The Chibok Girls: The Boko Haram Kidnappings And Islamist Militancy In Nigeria



## Synopsis

"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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"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

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.

Brilliant work--immediate and dynamic, stylistically--and emotionally wrenching in its honesty and authority.

I am satisfied with this product.

Chibok is a poor and neglected town in Nigeria, where much of the population work in agriculture and life was fairly uneventful in this obscure corner of the country, until an event which brought it to the world's notice. On the 14th April, 2014, members of Boko Haram kidnapped 276 schoolgirls. Less than fifty managed to jump off the vehicles which they were loaded into. In October 2016, 21 girls were released after negotiations and a handful were rescued or escaped. Tragically, the majority of the girls are still missing. Author, Helon Habila, travelled to Chibok; a town in lockdown since the events of 2014. While telling the story of the terrible events in Chibok, he also explains the current political situation in Nigeria. The checkpoints, the roadblocks, the schools burnt down in local villages he passes through, the villages abandoned, the ethnic and religious divisions, intolerance and corruption are all shown without emotion and are the more shocking for the journalistic style. Boko Haram is the nickname for a group named Jama'atu Ahlis Surina Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad, or "the people committed to the propaganda of the Prophet's teachings and Jihad" which was founded by Mohammed Yusuf. With such a long name, they presumably needed a shortened version; Boko Haram, which means (loosely translated), "Western education is abhorrent." Indeed, two months before the attack in Chibok, Boko Haram terrorists invaded the Federal Government College, killing fifty nine young boys. It was a chilling rehearsal for Chibok. Previously, the terrorists had been robbing banks; but as they were pushed back into the forest, kidnapping became an easier way to make money, as well as providing women to cook, clean and to act as "wives." One of their main aims is to stop education, especially that of girls. Habila explains the history behind the events and he also shows the impact that they have caused. Not only to the parents of the girls; many of whom have suffered physically, mentally and even died after the loss of their daughters, but also to the community and families. One of the most shocking parts of the book, though, comes when he interviews three of the girls themselves and they tell their story in such a straight-forward way. Even more shocking though, was (and is) the political inactivity after the girls were taken. In fact, one minister erupted when

being interviewed on television, so incensed was he about being questioned about the missing girls. It seems almost impossible that such a terrible thing as young girls being taken by force, for no other reason than wanting an education, has simply been ignored by the government of the country that is meant to protect them. This is an extremely important read. It gives a good background to the political situation in Nigeria and explains, without emotive language, but in a very moving way, the events in Chibok. He also tells of those, such as the Education Must Continue Initiative, who are fighting against Boko Haram and who helped some of the girls who did escape that day. The people Habila interviews are so remarkably stoic that I have to say I was astounded, tearful and extremely angry at the end of this book. A very moving read, which I highly recommend. I received a copy of this book from the publisher, via NetGalley, for review.

The Boko Haram Kidnappings and Islamist Militancy in Nigeria On 15 April 2014, 267 girls from the Chibok Secondary School in Northern Nigeria were kidnapped by Boko Haram, Mr. Habila shares with us the personal stories of some of the girls who managed to free themselves.

“The Chibok Girls” is poignant portraits of everyday Nigerians whose lives have been transformed by extremist forces. In his chronicle, Nigerian born poet and novelist Helon Habila has written with sensibility an eloquent account and has illuminated us with the long history of colonialism and cultural and religious differences that eventually lead to conflicts that is ravaging the country. 128 pages of the most devastating experience to both Christians and Muslims: Boko Haram. It took Mr. Habila months of research, travelling in the northeast part of the country, interviewing many people, observing conditions in camps and talking to displaced persons adding his experiences as a born Nigerian and interpreting the material in order to somehow be able to articulate to his satisfaction the fears and concerns of the victims of this insurgency and trying to personify the victims beyond mere statistic and transmit his thoughts to us in a simple and comprehensive manner. He did a fabulous job with this heartbreaking story. Even with its small size “The Chibok Girls” contains a wealth of information. I received an advance copy from Columbia Global Reports via NetGalley for an honest and unbiased review.

Do you remember the hashtag #bringbackourgirls? It made quite a storm on social media shortly after the 267 girls from the Chibok Secondary School in Nigeria were kidnapped by terrorists from the Boko Haram group in Nigeria. However, the time passed, the fate of the girls is still unknown, but the social media and the world in general got busy with more terror and kidnappings acts taking

place all over the world. Helon Habila is going to his native Nigeria, to Chibok, revealing the fine or deep social and cultural divisions, and the everyday struggle for survival. He observes with the educated eye of the journalist and writes with the inspiration of the novelist, keeping perfectly the balance between a featured report and a work of fiction. It reminded me of his *Oil on Water*, a novel which I liked. The case of the Chibok girls could be a revelation about the entire situation in Nigeria and the tensions created by the rise of the Boko Haram, of whose expansion the authorities were aware without intervening to stop it. An interesting testimony about a case that deserves more attention and constant action for finding the kidnapped girls. Disclaimer: Book offered by the publisher in exchange for an honest review

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