

# Abortions for Rape Victims

MAY 22, 2015

## **To the Editor:**

[“Former Captives in Nigeria Tell of Mass Rapes”](#) (front page, May 19) does not mention how the United States’ anti-abortion policy is determining the fate of female victims. Largely because of the abortion ban attached to American foreign aid, Nigerian women and girls raped and forcibly impregnated by Boko Haram militants will be denied lifesaving abortions.

Nearly all the major humanitarian groups in Nigeria, including the United Nations Population Fund, which is coordinating medical care for the rescued women, are subject to the American restrictions.

Boko Haram uses sexual violence and forcible impregnation as tactics of warfare; the United States’ abortion policy perpetuates the horror and effectiveness of these tactics.

Access to abortion services for war rape victims is a part of their right to all necessary medical care under the Geneva Conventions.

By contrast with the United States, Britain and an increasing number of countries acknowledge that the rights of women war rape victims to medical care under international law must include abortion, irrespective of local anti-abortion laws, and that denial of abortions may constitute torture.

It is shocking to think that the United States will compel these survivors — and many others who suffer similar fates in places like Syria and Iraq — to bear the children of those who rape them.

President Obama can mitigate the suffering of those who survived the horrors of captivity by issuing an executive order that lifts the ban and affirms American support for the rights of women under the Geneva Conventions.

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