**Press Release: For Immediate Release**

**20th August 2015**

**Ritual Killings Linked to Recent Spate of Kidnappings of Children in Cross River State, Nigeria**

The Prevent Abuse of Children Today (PACT) Coalition[[1]](#footnote-1) of Non-Governmental Organisations has been investigating the recent spate of child kidnapping in Calabar, the capital of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Over the last 9 months, at least 20 children in the city and outskirts of Calabar have been kidnapped. The number of such cases is on the rise with children aged between 1 – 7 years suddenly disappearing, leaving families distressed and helpless. It is believed that these incidents of kidnapping are sponsored by politicians in the State who use the body parts of the innocent victims for rituals, in order to gain victory during elections and electoral tribunals. Other similar cases have been reported throughout Nigeria.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Barrister James Ibor, Executive Secretary of the Basic Rights Counsel and spokesperson for the PACT Coalition said: “We condemn the heartless and senseless kidnapping of children in Cross River State and call on the Federal and State governments to put an end to child kidnapping and help save and protect the lives of our younger generation. The fact that the police appear more concerned with extorting money from the poor and desperate parents of these children than solving the crime is of great concern to us. We must all join hands and ensure that every effort is made to ensure that these kidnapped children are found and returned to their parents, as well as prosecuting anyone suspected of being involved in the kidnapping of a child”.

Cross River State domesticated the Child Rights Act in 2009 and set up the family court system in 2012 following a campaign led by the PACT coalition. However, child rights abuses are still widely documented in the state with data and documentation of these kidnapped children in Cross River State, and other child rights abuses, being kept by the PACT Coalition secretariat.

These recent cases have also drawn the attention of the International community, who have equally expressed their concern that children are being kidnapped and used for such purposes. Gary Foxcroft, Executive Director of the Witchcraft and Human Rights Information Network (WHRIN) said: “Unfortunately, the killing of children for their body parts to be used for perceived magic is common in many parts of Africa. Children are often used since their body parts are believed to be particularly powerful. Such practices are linked to witchdoctors, or ‘juju men’ as they are popularly known in Nigeria, who are contracted by powerful elites to carry out magical ceremonies that will give power or money to the purchaser. Offenders are very rarely arrested or prosecuted. Evidence also exists to suggest that Nollywood movies play a role in promoting such superstitious beliefs. However, there remains minimal regulation of such movies. More needs to be done to understand this problem so that such horrific child rights abuses do not continue”.

**~~~~~~~~ENDS~~~~~~~~~~**

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1. See - https://www.facebook.com/PACTcampaign [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For example see - http://sunnewsonline.com/new/horror-in-lagos-community-how-16-year-old-boy-killed-my-son-by-distressed-dad/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)