

In the past few years, the international community has been increasingly confronted with the recruitment and exploitation of children by terrorist and violent extremist groups. Numerous reports have shed some light on the extent of this disturbing phenomenon. Estimates indicate that, since 2009, about 8,000 children have been recruited and used by Boko Haram in Nigeria.<sup>1</sup> According to a report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, some boys have been forced to attack their own families to demonstrate loyalty to Boko Haram, while girls have been forced to marry, clean, cook and carry equipment and weapons.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights received consistent reports that some boys and girls were increasingly being used as human shields and to detonate bombs. In May 2015, for example, a girl about 12 years old was used to detonate a bomb at a bus station in Damaturu, Yobe State, killing seven people. Similar incidents were reported in Cameroon and the Niger. During attacks by Boko Haram, abducted boys were used to identify those who refused to join the group, as well as unmarried women and girls.