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African Jesuit leader calls for Nigerian president's resignation

by Joshua J. McElwee

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A leader of the Jesuit religious order in Africa has called for the resignation of Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan over the continuing failure of his government to locate or rescue nearly 300 teenage girls abducted by the terrorist group Boko Haram.

Writing in an open letter to the president Saturday, the Jesuit leader states that Jonathan's "actions or the lack thereof beggar belief."

"Mr. President ... I believe that, as a loyal citizen of Nigeria, I am morally obliged to request and demand your resignation," writes Jesuit Fr. Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, the head of the Jesuit's Eastern Africa province, which spans the countries of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia.

"In any decent and civilized country in the world, by this time, senior government officials would be queuing up to tender their resignation on account of their negligence and failure to protect these young girls," Orobator, a native Nigerian, continues.

"Instead, you sit ensconced in your leisured and fortified Aso Rock Villa and pronounce palliatives and platitudes, totally bereft of any strategy or idea on how to end the Boko Haram insurgency."

The terrorist group abducted the teenage girls April 14 from a secondary school in northeastern Nigeria, near the Cameroon border. Jonathan spoke publicly about the incident for the first time on May 4,

claiming his government was attempting to find the girls.

The incident has prompted worldwide outcry, partly focused on whether Jonathan's administration has acted adequately to rescue the girls. Several countries, including the U.S., have sent experts to assist in a search for the students.

In his letter, Orobator takes a forceful tone with Jonathan, quoting from the message of the Synod of Bishops of Africa in 2009, a worldwide meeting of Catholic bishops at the Vatican on the subject of Africa: "Many Catholics in high office have fallen woefully short in their performance in office. The synod calls on such people to repent, or quit the public arena and stop causing havoc to the people and giving the Catholic Church a bad name.?"

"I understand that you are not a Catholic, but you claim to profess faith in the God of Jesus Christ," Orobator writes to Jonathan.

"You have declared publicly that you are 'focused on serving my Creator, family and my country to the best of my ability,'" states Orobator. "I do not judge you on your service of your God and your family; but, your gross lack of ability has caused havoc to these abducted young and innocent Nigerians."

"You are giving the faith that you profess a bad name," concludes Orobator. "Mr. President, I fervently plead with you to resign and give way for another leader who will defend the rights and lives of the citizens of Nigeria. Resign! Resign!! Resign!!!"

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