

# **Imrana Alhaji Buba's statement for the Launch of the**

## **Exhibition**

### **Surviving Terrorism: Victims' Voices**

**Friday, 17 August 2018**

My name is Imrana Alhaji Buba. I am 25-years-old and I hail from Yobe state in north-eastern Nigeria. North-eastern Nigeria was famed for its hospitality and welcoming nature until Boko Haram surfaced.

On 6th June 2010 I was travelling to the University of Maiduguri where I was studying for my undergraduate degree, when my bus was stopped by suspected Boko Haram terrorists. They came aboard, checked ID cards, and then picked out some passengers. They left quickly just before they reached my seat as they thought that I was dead, and they marched away with other passengers, leaving the rest of us traumatised and alone.

Several things happened to my close family and friends whilst I was recovering from the trauma: my two uncles died in a bomb that was dropped in a crowded place close to market, my neighbour was

murdered in cold blood, and one of my friends was kidnapped for almost 3 weeks until his father was able to pay a ransom. As a result of these tragic incidents, my family, as well as many other community members, suffered severe emotional trauma. This is just a small picture of how Boko Haram attacks have affected many people in Nigeria.

These horrific incidents hardened and fuelled in me a desire to stop this bloodshed. In August 2010, I founded the Youth Coalition Against Terrorism (YOCAT); a volunteer-based coalition of over 600 youth that offers counselling services to victims of terrorism, as well as providing counter-radical peace education and skills training for unemployed youths, so that their frustration and hopelessness does not make them want to join the terrorists.

In YOCAT, most of our volunteers are victims of terrorism and we have partnered with many government agencies and local organizations in Nigeria to provide support to other victims and where we carry out our peace education programmes.

I have made it my life's work to ensure that my community, that has been affected by terrorism, is not forgotten and that victims' voices are heard in the fight against violent extremism.

I never thought that this would be the path of my life, but I could not carry on without helping my community. I realised that it is not only my community affected and I am grateful for this opportunity to speak out today, so that we can all remember victims from around the world. This is also why the International Day is important, and I thank the UN for recognising this and making sure that victims are not forgotten.

Thank you.