Lagos: US First Lady Michelle Obama yesterday denounced as an "unconscionable evil" the kidnapings of more than 200 Nigerian schoolgirls by militants as a "monstrous act of terrorism".

The First Lady had a private meeting with Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan yesterday. "They have to face the music," Mrs Obama said of the militants, who are believed to be behind the abduction of the girls in the north of the country.

"This is an unconscionable act committed by a terrorist group," Mrs Obama told reporters in Abuja today.

She said "the saddest news" was that many of the girls were still feared to be "at risk" in the militant’s hands or were "being used as human shields". Mrs Obama, who was accompanied on her trip by a 24-member delegation, said: "They've got to give up this evil business ..." before the girls could be reunited with their families.

"This is not a personal problem. This is a global problem," Mrs Obama said. "I hope the people of Nigeria and the United States and the rest of the world can join together ..."

Mrs Obama said the United States was providing "technical and investigatory assistance, helping with hostage negotiations, advising on military planning and operations and assisting with intelligence and information".

Terrorism has become a major threat for the United States since the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Mrs Obama added: "The facts are out there. We've been providing military assistance for a long time. But this is different. This is an act of terrorism that we cannot tolerate."

The crisis has become a major issue for the Nigerian government, which has come under pressure to provide more information about the girls' whereabouts.

The US government has deployed a team of experts to Nigeria, which includes three FBI personnel and four others from State and Defense departments.

Mrs Obama added: "We have a team here that is providing technical and investigatory assistance, helping with hostage negotiations, advising on military planning and operations and assisting with intelligence and information." The team is led by former FBI agent Tom Berger.

The First Lady also met with a group of Nigerian women, who were joined by British singer Bob Geldof, who said: "We have to do whatever we can to ensure that they are released." Ms Geldof's group, the Band Aid Trust, helped raise $40 million to free the Irish hostage Mark Foole, who was kidnapped in Nigeria in 1996.

Mrs Obama also met Nigerian National Security Adviser Sambo Dasuki, who is leading the government's efforts to locate the girls.

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