



Ending The Persecution of Christians in Nigeria

The United States Congress commends President Trump for his decisive action to redesignate Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) to hold perpetrators of violence to account and compel the Government of Nigeria to protect vulnerable communities and end religious persecution. The President called on Congressman Riley Moore, Chairman Tom Cole, and the House Appropriations Committee to investigate and produce a report on the persecution and slaughter of Nigerian Christians. To examine the facts, Appropriations Vice Chair Mario Díaz-Balart hosted an investigative roundtable and led a Congressional Delegation to Nigeria and House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Brian Mast and Africa Subcommittee Chairman Chris Smith held a hearing to gather evidence from government and civil society witnesses. The close collaboration culminated in the following recommendations.

Findings

After decades of persecution, Nigeria is the deadliest place in the world to be a Christian. Christians are subject to ongoing violent attacks from well-armed Fulani militias and terrorist groups, resulting in the death and murder of tens of thousands of Christians, including pastors and priests, the destruction of thousands of churches and schools, as well as kidnappings. Blasphemy laws in Nigeria's northern states are used to silence speech and dissent, target Christians and minorities, and justify so-called "convictions" without due process.

President Trump's bold action, and attention from Congress, has created a once-in-a-generation opportunity for real change to address this two-decades-long crisis. Although the Government of Nigeria is a key partner for the United States, such government must demonstrate the political will, including by allocating their own financial resources, to immediately reduce and then eliminate the violence. The United States and Nigeria should take this moment to redefine a new strategic partnership to make America – and Nigeria – safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Recommendations

- Strike a bilateral agreement between the United States and the Government of Nigeria to protect vulnerable Christian communities from violent persecution, eliminate jihadist terror activity in the region, further economic cooperation, and counter adversaries in the region, including the Chinese Communist Party and Russian Federation. Such an agreement should include:
 - Commitments by the Government of Nigeria to:
 - Co-fund donor-supported humanitarian assistance – including through faith-based organizations – and to prioritize underserved communities of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and their host communities, especially in the predominantly Christian Middle Belt region;
 - Support and respond to early-warning mechanisms to prevent attacks and kidnappings, including by deploying sufficient and capable security forces to the Middle Belt to enable rapid and effective response, and hold those who ignore the warnings accountable;
 - Remove Fulani militias from confiscated, productive farmland and enable the voluntary return of displaced communities to their homes, including by ensuring security and infrastructure, thereby reducing the need for humanitarian aid and generating economic development through increased agricultural productivity;

- Continue and expand security cooperation with the United States, including by divestment of Russian military equipment for American military equipment through sales and financing.
- Technical support to the Government of Nigeria to reduce and then eliminate violence from armed Fulani militias, including by:
 - Developing a demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration program to address illicit weapons and support safer communities while allowing farmers to engage in legitimate self-defense;
 - Supporting the new Ministry of Livestock, ranching plans, and meaningful land reform efforts; and
 - Enhancing the recruitment, technical capabilities, and willingness of the security forces and military to prevent and respond to violent attacks.
- Comprehensive counter-terrorism cooperation to rid the region of Foreign Terrorist Organizations that pose a direct threat to the American homeland, including through the provision of excess defense equipment and use of relevant drawdown authorities.
- Counteract the hostile foreign exploitation of Chinese illegal mining operations and their destabilizing practice of paying protection money to Fulani militias.
- Implement the National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2026, to support the preceding recommendations and the following priorities:
 - Increased accountability by requiring proof of progress before obligating additional funds.
 - Programs to address religious freedom, atrocity response, legal reforms, expand and improve policing, strengthen the criminal justice sector, improve anti-money laundering methods, and enhance capabilities to disrupt terrorist financing networks as well as capture illicit monies from Fulani militia members.
 - Treasury Department programs and activities to strengthen the integrity of Nigeria's financial system which will safeguard U.S. national security and enhance the favorable balance of trade for the United States.
 - U.S. Development Finance Corporation investments in Nigeria, especially in the Middle Belt.
 - GAO audit report on the effectiveness of aid to Nigeria and recommendations for strengthened oversight.
- Invoke and publicly announce the CPC Presidential Directives to name and shame perpetrators of violence.
- Implement sanctions on groups and individuals who participate in, or tolerate violence against, Christians.
- Continue visa restrictions for perpetrators involved in Christian violence and violations of religious freedom.
- Demand the repeal of sharia codes and criminal anti-blasphemy laws.
- Review and use points of leverage to compel Fulani herdsmen to disarm, including by blocking export of beef and other cattle-related products to countries like Ivory Coast, Ghana, South Africa, and Senegal.
- Ensure adequate staffing of diplomatic posts in Nigeria.
- Improve the Foreign Military Sales process to expedite the procurement and delivery of defense articles and services necessary to support shared security priorities.
- Require a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Nigeria's sectarian and communal violence, and review classifying Fulani militia groups with links to terror groups, as well as other groups conducting organized campaigns of violence that threaten the United States, as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.
- Enlist the support of international partners, including France, Hungary, and the United Kingdom.