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Written statement* submitted by European Centre for Law and Justice, The / Centre Européen pour le droit, les Justice et les droits de l'homme, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



Requesting That The United Nations Recognize The Atrocities Committed Against Christians In Nigeria And Take Action To End The Violence

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's devastating humanitarian crisis is escalating and has already resulted in the deaths and kidnappings of thousands of Christians who are continually the targets of religiously motivated violence. In fact, in its 2022 World Watch List, Open Doors listed Nigeria as the 7th worst place for Christians to live(1). According to the former chair of the Nigeria Human Rights Commission, as a result of the violence "entire communities are being liquidated, displaced (and) destroyed"(2).

2. BACKGROUND

The violence facing Christians in Nigeria primarily stems from Islamic extremist groups such as Boko Haram and the Fulani herdsmen. These groups have become notorious for attacking Christians, burning down homes, and even kidnapping children from their schools. In the past 12 years these groups have been responsible for the deaths of approximately 43,000 Christians and the attacks on 17,500 churches(3).

The frequency in which reports come out about another village being destroyed, Christians being killed, or children being abducted is alarming and beyond cause for concern. It is clear that Nigeria is failing its people by not taking immediate and meaningful action to stop the violence. In fact, since our last report to the Council in August of 2021, the U.N. Refugee Agency (UNRA) has estimated that an additional 200,000 people have become displaced in north-eastern Nigeria as a result of the violence(4). The people of Nigeria are frustrated and believe that their cries for help are being ignored by the government. A statement released by the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Nigeria further underscores this sentiment:

The very survival of the nation is at stake. The nation is falling apart. Serious insecurity, clearly evident in widespread loss of lives and property, for long unaddressed, has left the sad and dangerous impression that those who have assumed the duty and authority to secure the nation are either unable - or worse still, unwilling - to take up the responsibilities of their office. Time is running out and the situation needs to improve(5).

3. VIOLATIONS

On 22 January 2022, Fulani herdsmen attacked Dong village in Plateau State killing four Christians and wounding two others(6). This is not the first time the village has been attacked by Fulani herdsmen(7). According to a resident of the village, "Dong, our community, has constantly been attacked by armed Muslim Fulani terrorists in the recent past. We need your prayers"(8).

On 20 January 2022, Boko Haram abducted 17 girls from the Chibok area of Borno State(9). According to an eyewitness, "The militants targeted a church and Christians when they stormed Pemi on Thursday . . . They were shooting sporadically after they rounded the community. Some could not have access to escape, so they abducted 17 girls"(10). In addition to the abductions, Boko Haram burned down two churches and two homes(11).

On 11 January 2022, a group of Fulani herdsmen carried out an attack in Ancha village killing 18 Christians(12). In addition to those killed, the Fulani herdsmen also proceeded to burn down more than 100 homes and six people were sent to the hospital to receive medical treatment(13).

In November 2021, Fulani herdsmen attacked a village in Plateau State killing 10 Christians including three children younger than ten and burning down 100 homes(14). The attack left 700 people in the village displaced(15).

On 31 October 2021, Fulani herdsman carried out an attack during a Baptist church service in southern Kaduna State killing two Christians and abducting an unspecified number of others(16). The chairman for the Kaduna State Chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) voiced his frustration at the governments apparent unwillingness to stop the violence, “Christians are being killed without respite, and the government exhibits carelessness in tackling these monsters”(17).

In September 2021, suspected Fulani herdsmen carried out an attack in Kaduna State killing at least 30 people(18). According to a Catholic Priest who works in the area, “The Herdsmen came in in large numbers and began shooting at anything on sight. As at this morning we have counted 30 dead bodies mostly women and children, 3 still missing while 5 are receiving treatment in the hospital”(19). The attack lasted approximately two hours and also resulted in at least 20 houses being destroyed(20).

In our last report, we told this Council of an attack in July 2021 that resulted in more than 120 students being kidnapped from a Baptist boarding school in the northern state of Kaduna(21). According to reports, the assailants attacked Bethel Baptist High in the middle of the night, began firing their weapons indiscriminately, and abducted the students(22). Since the raid approximately 90 of the students have been released. However, at the time of this report, approximately 30 students remain captive(23).

Finally, we would also like to once again remind the Council of imprisoned teenager L.S. L.S., who was only 14 when kidnapped, has been held captive by Boko Haram for more than three years because of her Christian faith(24). As a captive she has experienced unspeakable horror including being raped, impregnated, and twice has given birth to her captor’s children(25). 19 February 2022 will mark four years since Leah was abducted from her school(26).

4. REQUEST

Nigeria must undertake immediate measures to protect its citizens. Every day, the people of Nigeria wake up with the fear that their children may be kidnapped, their homes burned down, or that they themselves may be killed. This is the tragic reality of those living in Nigeria. Furthermore, Christians should be able to peacefully live out their faith and attend religious services without the fear that they will be attacked while doing so.

Additionally, Nigeria must do everything in its power to ensure the safe and immediate release of L.S. as well as all of those who have been kidnapped by Islamic extremists. We further urge the international community to do everything in their power to work with Nigeria to put an end to the violence and provide aid for the thousands of Nigerians who have become displaced.

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(2) At Least 14 Christians Killed in Nigeria, Including Pastor, BAPTIST STANDARD (17 Sep. 2021), <https://www.baptiststandard.com/news/world/at-least-14-christians-killed-in-nigeria-including-pastor/>.

(3) “Appalled”: As Thousands of Nigerian Christians Get Slaughtered, Biden Admin Drops Nigeria from Freedom Watchlist, CBN (24 Nov. 2021), <https://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2021/november/appalled-as-thousands-of-nigerian-christians-get-slaughtered-biden-admin-drops-nigeria-from-freedom-watchlist>.

(4) Nigeria Emergency, UNRA, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/nigeria-emergency.html> (last visited 2 Feb. 2022),

(5) UPDATED, Nigeria on Brink of Collapse, Catholic Bishops Warn, PREMIUM TIMES (25 Feb. 2021), <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/445252-nigeria-on-brink-of-collapse-catholic-bishops-warn.html>.

- (6) Fulani Militants Continue to Terrorize Christians in Nigeria, INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN (2 Feb. 2022), <https://www.persecution.org/2022/02/01/fulani-militants-continue-terrorize-christians-nigeria/>.
- (7) Id.
- (8) Id.
- (9) Boko Haram Terrorists Abduct 17 Girls, kill “Many Christians”, and Burn Down Two Churches in Single Attack, INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN (25 Jan. 2022), <https://www.persecution.org/2022/01/25/boko-haram-terrorists-abduct-17-girls-kill-many-christians-burn-two-churches-single-attack/>.
- (10) Id.
- (11) Id.
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- (15) Id.
- (16) Two Christians Killed, Dozens Abducted in Attack on Church in Nigeria, EVANGELICAL FOCUS (4 Nov. 2021), <https://evangelicalfocus.com/world/14012/two-christians-killed-dozens-abducted-in-attack-on-church-in-nigeria>.
- (17) Id.
- (18) Breaking: Bloody Sunday in Southern Kaduna as Terrorist Herdsmen Kill 30, Burn Several Houses, MIDDLE BELT TIMES (27 Sep. 2021), <https://middlebelttimes.com/2021/09/27/breaking-bloody-sunday-in-southern-kaduna-as-terrorist-herdsmen-kill-30-burn-several-houses/>.
- (19) Id.
- (20) Id.
- (21) 140 Nigerian Baptist Students Kidnapped in Kaduna, CHRISTIANITY TODAY (5 Jul. 2021, 1:52 PM), <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/july/nigeria-baptist-students-kidnapped-bethel-school-kaduna.html>.
- (22) Id.
- (23) Nigeria: Release of Ten Students Kidnapped from Baptist Boarding School in July, PAUDAL (21 Sep. 2021)
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- (25) Id.
- (26) Id.