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## Human Rights Council

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### Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

## Written statement\* submitted by Jubilee Campaign, 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.

[1 February 2022]

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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.



## **Daily Genocidal Violence Against Nigerians by Militant Actors**

### **A Call to Action**

Jubilee Campaign would like to raise to the Council's attention the situation in which Nigerian citizens are being killed in shocking numbers by radical Islamic jihadists, including Fulani militants, Boko Haram, and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). In 2020 the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court concluded that there is reason to believe that Boko Haram and its splinter militant groups were committing crimes against humanity and war crimes.<sup>(1)</sup> More recently, in November 2020 eight UN human rights experts released a joint statement urging the Nigerian government to "set up a credible, independent inquiry" into police brutality in Nigeria which has led to a multitude of civilian deaths.<sup>(2)</sup> We make the argument that the United Nations must either encourage and assist the Nigerian government in establishing a similar mechanism to investigate violent atrocities taking place against innocent Nigerians, or otherwise take up the task of establishing one within the United Nations itself.

### **Violent Deaths and Civilian Casualties**

Islamic jihadist terrorist groups are wreaking havoc on Nigerian civilians; the Observatory of Religious Freedom in Africa reported that between 1 October 2019 and 30 September 2021, jihadist assailants killed 8,560 Nigerian Christians and were responsible for a substantial portion of the 2,417 Muslim deaths during this period.<sup>(3)</sup>

Boko Haram has been active in Nigeria since 2000 and maintains the goal of eradicating alleged Western influences on Nigerian society – which include education and Christianity – and simultaneously wage jihad to establish an Islamic state. Despite that the height of Boko Haram's terrorist activity took place around 2014 and 2015, after which point their influence diminished due to coordinated anti-terrorism efforts by Nigeria and adjacent nations, they have embarked on a resurgence in recent years. In 2018, Boko Haram faction group ISWAP kidnapped 110 students from Government Girls' Science and Technical College in Dapchi in an incident resembling Boko Haram's 2014 mass abduction of 276 schoolgirls in Chibok. In January 2020, Boko Haram abducted and subsequently beheaded Reverend Lawan Andimi of Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (EYN) in a filmed incident.<sup>(4)</sup> In one of its deadliest recent attacks in February 2020, Boko Haram killed 30 motorists along the road between Borno State's and Yobe State's capitals Maiduguri and Damaturu, marking the group's sixth onslaught in that location in the past ten months.<sup>(5)</sup> In June 2020, suspected Boko Haram militants ambushed a village in Borno State in armored tanks and large trucks, confiscated residents' weapons, and then shot indiscriminately, killing 81 civilians and kidnapping seven.<sup>(6)</sup> In November 2020, Boko Haram committed what the UN called the "most violent direct attack against innocent [Nigerian] civilians this year"<sup>(7)</sup>, killing between 70 and 110 civilians after storming rice farms and slitting individuals' throats.<sup>(8)</sup> In February 2021, Boko Haram militants launched rocket-propelled grenades into a heavily populated area in Borno State's capital Maiduguri, killing ten civilians; one of the attacked during the onslaught was a children's playground, though it is unclear whether any casualties occurred here.<sup>(9)</sup>

Another group responsible for increasing civilian deaths, especially within the past four years or so, are radical Fulani militants, who operate primarily in Nigeria's Middle Belt, and target predominantly Christian farming communities using sophisticated weaponry such as AK-47s to slaughter hundreds of civilians. It is essential to note that in this submission we focus only on those Fulani who subscribe to a violent Islamist ideology, and not the broader Fulani ethnic group which is largely peaceful and adheres to many different faiths and interpretations. In October 2021, the Nigeria-based International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law estimated that in just the first nine months of the year, jihadist Fulani militants were responsible for no fewer than 3,140 Nigerian Christian casualties. Christian Solidarity International (CSI) recorded at least 615 civilian deaths at the hands of radical Fulani "bandits", "herdsmen", "gunmen", and "militants" in the first three weeks of 2022;

moreover, they documented approximately 231 kidnapped individuals.<sup>(10)</sup> Radical Fulani militants have committed attacks so frequently that it would take pages to list them in this submission, but in 2020 the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland's All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief outlined the patterns that span across all Fulani militant attacks: late at night, the perpetrators will emerge from forests and encroach upon villages wielding guns and spears, sometimes while riding motorcycles, and will attack residents while many are asleep and defenseless. Often, these killings are accompanied by attacks on houses of worship including churches and pastors' homes, and fires that are intentionally ignited by militants on personal homes and businesses.<sup>(11)</sup> In separate occasions, bands of armed men suspected to be Fulani militants based on their dress, accents, and location of activities, conduct kidnappings of civilians, often students from educational institutions. Suspected Fulani militants were responsible for the following abductions in 2020 and 2021: three Christian students and a teacher from Prince Academy School (August 2020); 27 students and 12 staff from Government Science College in Kagura, Niger State (February 2021); 279 students from Government Girls Science Secondary School in Zamfara State (February 2021); 39 students from Federal College of Forestry Mechanization in Kaduna State (March 2021); 20 students from Greenfield University in Kaduna State (April 2021); three students from Federal University of Agriculture in Benue State (April 2021); 136 students from the Salihu Tanko Islamic School Tegna in Niger State (May 2021); 100 students from Federal Government College in Kebbi State (June 2021); 180 students from Bethel Baptist High School in Kaduna State (July 2021); 15 students from College of Agriculture in Zamfara State (August 2021); 9 students from Islamiyya School in Katsina State (August 2021); 73 students from Government Day Secondary School in Zamfara State (September 2021).

## Sexual Violence and Domestic Servitude

Boko Haram has a track record of engaging in mass kidnappings of students from educational institutions as well; however, in recent years this has become a less frequent tactic of the group and instead has been taken up more commonly by Fulani militants. Though Boko Haram has not recently conducted any noteworthy mass abductions, however, it is important to highlight that not all their former kidnapping victims have been released, and in fact a substantial portion remain in captivity and are exploited on a daily basis. For example, girls and women are often forced to marry their captors and give birth to multiple children to be raised in the terrorist group's community, and they face sexual violence and rape at the hands of their 'husbands'. Many of these women and girls, in fact, begin to see sex as a form of currency by which to obtain food and daily necessities. Those that have escaped Boko Haram or have otherwise been released by the group have often been through at least one forced pregnancy and have developed sexually transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS, Gonorrhea, and Hepatitis. In addition to sexual slavery and violence, women and girls are confined to domestic servitude, being responsible for cooking, cleaning, maintaining weapons, childrearing, fetching water, and more; Christian captive girls and women face horrendous living conditions as well, such as having to sleep under trees rather than in tents and being permitted to eat only one meager meal a day. While Boko Haram does not appear to be conducting many mass kidnappings as of late, the Fulani militants that have abducted hundreds of students from their schools within the past year have increasingly adopted the tactics of Boko Haram; it is reasonable to be concerned that they may soon turn from kidnapping for ransom and instead harbor captives for similar exploitation and servitude.

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(1) Court Pénale Internationale/International Criminal Court, Statement of the Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, on the conclusion of the preliminary examination of the situation in Nigeria, 11 December 2020.

(2) OHCHR, UN human rights experts demand Nigeria investigate shooting of peaceful protesters by soldiers, 3 November 2020.

- (3) Observatory of Religious Freedom in Africa (ORFA), SOS Letter on Nigeria from Concerned Groups, 17 December 2021.
- (4) Jayson Casper, “Boko Haram Executes Pastor Who Turned Hostage Video into Testimony”, Christianity Today, 21 January 2020.
- (5) Amnesty International, “Nigeria: Military razes villages as Boko Haram attacks escalate”, 14 February 2020.
- (6) Bukola Adebayo & Isaac Abrak, “81 killed in bloody Boko Haram attack in Nigerian village”, CNN World, 10 June 2020.
- (7) United Nations, Mr Edward Kallon, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria, “Statement on Attack Against Civilians in Koshobe, Borno”, 29 November 2020.
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- (9) BBC News, “Nigeria’s Boko Haram crisis: Maiduguri rocket attack kills 10”, 24 February 2021.
- (10) Mariam Habib Matta, “Violence in Nigeria: At least 615 killed in first three weeks of 2022”, Christian Solidarity International, 24 January 2022.
- (11) All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief, Nigeria: Unfolding Genocide?, June 2020.