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

## **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.

[19 August 2022]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



# **Requesting that the United Nations Condemn the Daily Atrocities Committed Against Christians in Nigeria and Take Immediate Action to End the Violence and Help the Victims**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In 2021, 4,650 Christians were reported to have been killed in Nigeria at the hands of radical extremists.[1] This means that, in 2021, a Christian was killed in Nigeria on average every two hours.[2] Now, just six months into 2022, the death toll is on pace to match, and possibly even exceed, that 2021 total.[3] In response to an attack on Christians in Taraba state, a member of Nigeria's National Assembly stated that "[t]hese killings and destruction have become daily occurrences . . . . All these attacks have kept occurring without any strong, coordinated and consistent intervention from the security agencies."

The purpose of the United Nations, *inter alia*, is "[t]o maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression . . . ."[4] Terrorist groups like Boko Haram, ISWAP, and the Fulani herdsmen are making a mockery of this principle and sticking their finger in the international community's face by their continued violence.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

Last year, more Christians were killed in Nigeria than in any other country.[5] Christians in Nigeria live their lives with the knowledge that at any moment they could be attacked and killed by radical extremists. In fact, over the past two decades, nearly 60,000 Christians have been killed in Nigeria.[6] Most of these attacks occur in the northern regions of Nigeria and are carried out by Islamic extremist groups such as the Fulani herdsmen, ISWAP, and Boko Haram.[7]

We have submitted to this Council numerous reports detailing the atrocities being carried out against Christians for simply practicing their faith. The reports include children being kidnapped from schools and gunmen entering churches and firing indiscriminately, killing men, women, and children. In order for Christians to have a future in Nigeria, immediate and meaningful action must be taken to stop the senseless violence.

## **3. VIOLATIONS**

On July 31, 2022, in Plateau state, a group of Fulani herdsmen killed seven Christians, four of whom were children. Two additional people were injured, including a 4-month-old baby whose hand was cut off. This attack came just 10 days after another group of suspected Fulani herdsmen killed 5 Christians in Fusa village in Plateau state.

On July 15, 2022, two priests were abducted from the church rectory in the town of Lere located in Kaduna state.[8] One of the priests was fortunate to escape his captors; however, the other was "brutally killed" later that same day.[13]

In July 2022, Edo state police rescued a Catholic priest who had been kidnapped.[9] During the rescue, police were able to kill 3 of the alleged kidnappers.[10] That same month, on July 5, 2022, police also rescued two more priests who had been abducted in Edo state.[11]

On July 5, 2022, gunmen invaded a pastor's home at 2 a.m. in northeast Nigeria. The gunmen proceeded to shoot and kill the pastor and his two sons along with wounding his wife. The gunmen then kidnapped the pastor's 13-year-old daughter and released her three days later after they were paid a ransom.

On June 5, 2022, gunmen stormed a Catholic church during a Sunday Mass and opened fire, killing at least 50 people including women and children.[12] According to a police spokesperson, "[t]he gunmen shot at people outside and inside the church building, killing and [injuring] worshippers." [13]

That same month, gunmen attacked a Catholic and a Baptist church in Kaduna state.[14] The attack came on a Sunday morning while both churches were conducting services. Between the two attacks, the gunmen killed eight people and kidnapped 38 others.[15]

On May 25, 2022, two Catholic priests along with two church members were abducted around 1:00 am in Katsina state.[16] It is unknown if the attackers belonged to any particular terrorist organization.[17] The current whereabouts of the kidnapped Christians are unknown.[18]

On May 12, 2022, a 19-year-old Christian girl was killed by her Muslim classmates after she was accused of blaspheming against Islam.[19] According to an eyewitness, the girl “was beaten mercilessly, stoned and burnt to death by some aggressive Muslims course mates.”[20] Even more troubling was the fact that security personnel “wanted to intervene but they were chased by the angry mob.”[21] This senseless act of violence stemmed from a post she made in an online chatroom where she gave Jesus credit for helping her pass her exams.[22]

In May 2022, members of ISIS slaughtered 20 Christians.[23] A video showing the massacre with armed militants standing behind their kneeling victims was released by ISIS.[24] The group claimed that it was an act of revenge for the deaths of ISIS members in the Middle East.[25]

On May 5, 2022, a group of Fulani herdsmen armed with Ak-47s opened fire on a group of Christians in Kwall District.[26] Eight Christians were killed in this attack, with two of the victims appearing to be younger than 5 years old.[27]

We would also like to once again remind the Council that Leah Sharibu remains imprisoned by Boko Haram simply for the fact that she is a Christian and refuses to renounce her faith. Leah was kidnapped from her school when she was only 14 and, on May 14, 2022, Leah turned 19.[28] Leah has now spent her last five birthdays suffering at the hands of Boko Haram. As a captive, Leah has experienced immense suffering and unfathomable horror including being raped, impregnated, and giving birth to her captor’s children twice.[29]

#### 4. REQUEST

Christians in Nigeria continue to suffer daily because of a lack of meaningful intervention by both the government of Nigeria and the international community. This lack of action will only lead to more death and destruction. In 2021, a Christian in Nigeria was killed on average every two hours.[30] This year is no different. The people who are suffering on a daily basis need help and they need help now. The international community cannot afford to waste another day.

We also respectfully ask this Council to work with the government of Nigeria for the immediate and safe release of Leah Sharibu and to ensure that those responsible are fully prosecuted. Additionally, in order to ensure that Christians have a future in Nigeria, more humanitarian aid and assistance be allocated to the victims who have been forced from their homes as a result of all the violence.

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