

October 15, 2025

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We fervently urge you to redesignate Nigeria as a “Country of Particular Concern” (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act, as you did in your first term. The last several years have seen a burgeoning of violent attacks specifically targeting rural Christians in the country’s Middle Belt, while the government in Abuja barely lifts a finger to protect them.

U.S. law warrants CPC designation when a country is found to be “tolerating” serious violations of religious freedom, as well as when itself carries out violations. The Nigerian government is directly violating religious freedom by enforcing Islamic blasphemy laws that carry the death penalty and harsh prison sentences against citizens of various religions. It also demonstrably tolerates relentless aggression uniquely against Christian farming families by militant Fulani Muslim herders, who appear intent on forcibly Islamizing the Middle Belt.

Across Nigeria’s north, innocent Muslims and Christians, alike, are brutally victimized by Boko Haram, and other Islamic State and al Qaeda-linked terror groups seeking religious and political domination within that country. Significantly, for Christians, Nigeria is singled out as currently the world’s most deadly country, according to the respected Christian research group Open Doors. The Nigerian civic group Inter Society on Civil Rights and Rule of Law finds that 52,000 Christians have been killed and over 20,000 churches have been attacked and destroyed since 2009 by various Islamist extremist groups in Nigeria. Thousands of Christians have been murdered and raped in the current year so far. Over 100 Christian pastors and Catholic priests have been taken hostage for ransom.

The biggest threat facing Nigeria’s Christians comes from Fulani Muslim herders. With cries of “Allahu Akbar” and wielding AK-47s, they invade peaceful Christian farming areas in Nigeria’s central region, massacring families, [burning homes and harvests](#), and driving millions of Christians from their ancestral lands. Many local churches and civic observers see this pattern of Fulani attacks as a coordinated effort to seize land and forcibly Islamize the area.

In stark contrast to its fight against northern terror groups, Nigeria’s government allows the militant Fulani herders to attack defenseless Middle Belt Christians with complete impunity. It fails to investigate the Fulanis’ organizational structures and identify who is arming them. The authorities don’t enforce the country’s gun bans against the Fulani. They don’t act to reclaim the stolen farms for their Christian owners, who are instead consigned to destitution in internally displaced camps that receive little, if any, government assistance. They rarely arrest and never convict Fulanis who attack Christians. Even when warned of impending Fulani attacks, government security forces are typically unresponsive or ineffective.

Four and a half years ago, the Biden administration revoked your administration's CPC designation of Nigeria. The State Department's religious freedom report of 2023 gives a neo-Marxist theory about the Fulani attacks; namely, climate change is causing "clashes" between two rural socioeconomic groups over scarce natural resources. The UN and most media follow suit. The UNHCR, for example, currently posts an [article](#) with the [woke](#) title: "Climate change fuels deadly conflict in Nigeria's Middle Belt."

In Benue state alone, 900 Christians have been reported killed to date this year. Catholic Bishop Wilfred [Anagbe testified](#) on the Fulani persecution in his Benue diocese of Makurdi, at March 12, 2025, hearings before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Africa. He stated: "The experience of Christians in Nigeria can be summed up as a Church under Islamist extermination." Soon after, Fulani militants attacked the bishop's home village and massacred 12 of his relatives. In mid-June, in another Benue town, Fulani invaders killed over 200 Christians "with extreme cruelty" in the words of Pope Leo XIV, who prayed for them. Similar attacks occur frequently in Kaduna and Plateau states, too.

We are concerned that your administration may be considering listing Nigeria on the IRF Act's "Special Watch List" instead of designating it as a CPC. If so, this may stem from a misconception that CPC designation would require the United States to isolate or sanction Nigeria. In fact, the IRF Act does not mandate automatic sanctions and, moreover, provides for a sanctions waiver and cites a range of other possible policy responses.

We support the recommendation for Nigeria's CPC designation by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and in bills recently introduced in Congress by Senator Ted Cruz and Representative Chris Smith. Even talk show host [Bill Maher](#), who is not a Christian, was emphatic that there needs to be a meaningful American response to the "systematic killing of Christians in Nigeria."

We believe that, after nearly five years of simply "watching" the arrest of individuals on harsh blasphemy charges and the relentless massacre and persecution of defenseless Christians solely for their faith, assigning only Special Watch List status would be a weak and legally inadequate response. Such a move would dishonor religious freedom as a core pillar of U.S. foreign policy and further reinforce the previous administration's downgrade and sidelining of the targeted killing of Christians.

We, therefore, respectfully urge you to designate Nigeria as a CPC without further delay.

Sincerely,

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