

October 22, 2026

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

RE: We respectfully ask that you direct the Intelligence Community, through the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and the National Counterterrorism Center, to prioritize collection, analysis, and reporting on Fulani ethnic militia networks as a discrete counterterrorism and atrocity-risk problem rather than as undifferentiated “farmer-herder” communal violence.

Dear Mr. President:

As a coalition of concerned leaders of U.S. NGOs and others working in Nigeria, we thank you for your decisive engagement to protect Christians in the country over the past year.

The redesignation of Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern, the Christmas 2025 strikes against ISIS targets, the deployment of personnel and intelligence support, the Joint Working Group, and the 2026 Defense Cooperation Roadmap have focused necessary attention and resources on the jihadist threat in the country’s north. We strongly encourage you to sustain and deepen those efforts against Boko Haram, ISWAP, and related terror networks.

At the same time, open-source and commission reporting describe a large, lethal actor set in the Middle Belt that the Intelligence Community has not systematically prioritized. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom’s May 2026 report, “Nonstate Violators of Religious Freedom in Nigeria: Fulani Militants,” estimates roughly 30,000 armed Fulani militants operating in groups of about 10 to 1,000, concentrated from the northwest through the Middle Belt and increasingly active in the south. USCIRF found that violence by these militants caused more deaths across religious communities over the preceding year than organized insurgent groups or criminal gangs, and that attacks have displaced at least 1.3 million people in the Middle Belt. Documented incidents include the June 2025 attack on Yelewata, Benue State, killing more than 200 people—mostly Christian women and children—including internally displaced persons sheltering at a Catholic mission.

The Observatory for Religious Freedom in Africa (ORFA), in its June 2026 six-year study covering October 2019 - September 2025, documented 79,323 people killed and 34,773 abducted in terror-related violence. Fulani terror groups accounted for 44 percent of civilian killings - far exceeding the combined share of Boko Haram and ISWAP. Christians are killed at approximately twice the absolute rate of Muslims and at 4.4 times the rate relative to population in affected states; Fulani groups are responsible for 53 percent of Christian civilian deaths. ORFA further documented a “Captivity by Creed” pattern in which Christian hostages face higher ransoms, greater violence in captivity, and elevated risk of execution.

InterSociety’s September 2026 report stated that 3,083 Christians were killed and 3,193 abducted from January through August 2026 in attacks linked to jihadist groups, with 400 churches attacked and 25 priests/pastors killed or abducted. It attributed roughly 90 percent of the documented attacks (including those on Christian communities and places of worship) to jihadist Fulani herdsmen and Fulani bandits.

The figure aligns with their cumulative estimate that churches attacked or destroyed since July 2009 rose from about 19,400 at the end of 2025 to roughly 19,800 by the end of August 2026.

Despite that scale, Fulani ethnic militia networks do not appear as a named priority in public Intelligence Community threat framing. Collection and analysis remain oriented toward Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province. AFRICOM leadership has described ISWAP as the most concerning Nigeria-linked group and has characterized recent U.S. - Nigeria intelligence sharing as partner-enablement against jihadist networks, not as a dedicated effort against Middle Belt militia structures. The groups lack a single command, yet they coordinate with bandits and extremist organizations and operate with mixed financial and ideological motives, including attacks accompanied by religious slogans and the burning of churches and homes.

We therefore respectfully **ask that you direct the Intelligence Community, through the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and the National Counterterrorism Center, to prioritize collection, analysis, and reporting on Fulani ethnic militia networks as a discrete counterterrorism and atrocity-risk problem rather than as undifferentiated “farmer-herder” communal violence.** Tasking should cover organization, financing, arms flows, cross-border movement, and any links to designated terrorist groups, and should assess whether current framing is obscuring a terrorism and mass-atrocity threat. Such prioritization would close a clear analytic and collection gap and supply the evidence base needed to evaluate a future Foreign Terrorist Organization designation.

Continued progress in the north, paired with expanded Middle Belt intelligence collection on these networks, would give Nigerian Christians the sustained protection your leadership has begun to deliver. Thank you for considering this request. We stand ready to provide additional documentation or briefings.

Respectfully,

Hon. Sam Brownback
U.S. Ambassador At Large (2018-2021)
Office of International Religious Freedom
U.S. Department of State

Dede Laugesen
President & CEO
Save The Persecuted Christians

Additional signatories may be found below.

cc: Reps. Riley Moore, Tom Cole and Chris Smith, USCIRF and the IRF Office at the U.S. State Department

ADDITIONAL SIGNATORIES

(with titles for identity only)

Frank Wolf
Former Member, U.S. Congress
(VA)
U.S. House of Representatives

Paul Diamond
Barrister
Lead Barrister on the
Law of Religious Liberty (U.K.)

Suzanne Bock Grishman
Executive Director
Mercury One

Nina Shea
Senior Fellow & Director
Center for Religious Freedom
Hudson Institute

Dr. Rev. Oluwasayo Ajiboye
President
Mission Africa International

Dr. Gloria Puldu
Coordinator
LEAH Project

Patrick Carberry
President and Founder
Joshuacord

Charmaine Hedding
President
Shai Fund

Sarah Makin
Principal
Makin Strategies

Greg Mitchell
Founder & CEO
IRF Secretariat

Troy A. Miller
President and CEO
National Religious Broadcasters

Kay Alice Daly
Vice President
Interfaith Council of
Greater Sacramento

Col. Rob Maness (Ret.)
Chairman
GatorPAC LLC

Reverend Kevin Jessip
President
The Return

Rev. Dr. Polycarp Gbaja
CEO
Stride Leadership Foundation

Reuben Emmanuel, Esq.
Barrister and Solicitor
Balance Chambers

Deana Brown
CEO and Founder
Freedom Seekers International

Odeh Friday
Country Director
Accountability Lab Nigeria

Scott Morgan
President
Red Eagle Enterprises

Ron Armstrong
President
Stand Up Michigan

Dr. Jorge Parrott
President
Christ's Mandate for Missions

Patricia Streeter
Co-Leader
Anglican Persecuted Church
Network

Stephen Osemwegie
President
Save Nigeria Group USA

Arielle Del Turco
Director
Center for Religious Liberty
Family Research Council

Michael Burton
International Director
Ignition633 Ministries

Lauren Homer
President
Law and Liberty Trust

Rev. Fr. Ambrose Ekeroku,
OCD
Catholic Priest
Order of Discalced Carmelites
George Parker
Exec. Director
Revealing Light Ministries

Greg Young
Pastor
Faith Harvest Church

Rev. Dr. William Devlin
CEO
Widows And Orphans

Oleg Atbashian
Media Director
Institute for the American
Future

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

Accountability Lab Nigeria
Anglican Persecuted Church Network
Berom Community North America
Center for Religious Freedom at Hudson Institute
Christ's Mandate for Missions
Christian Freedom International
Faith Harvest Church
Freedom Seekers International
GatorPAC LLC
Ignition633 Ministries
Institute for the American Future
International Committee on Nigeria and the Sahel (ICON-S)
International Freedom Coalition
iReach Global
Joshuacord
Law and Liberty Trust
Mercury One
Mission Africa International
National Religious Broadcasters
Prayer Pioneers
Save Nigeria Group USA
Save the Persecuted Christians
Shai Fund
Stand Up Michigan
Stride Leadership Foundation
Red Eagle Enterprises
Revealing Light Ministries
The Return