

Simona Cruciani
Political Affairs Officer
United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect

cc: Adama Dieng
Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide
United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect

cc. Karen Smith
Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect
United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect

Dear Ms. Cruciani, Mr. Dieng, and Ms. Smith,

We, the undersigned, are a collection of organizations and activists of multiple religious, intellectual, and political backgrounds who work in collaboration to promote and protect inalienable human rights as well as the internationally accepted standard of religious freedom; together we strive to raise awareness of situations in which such fundamental rights and freedoms are unjustly challenged and rescinded. We would first like to express our gratitude for the imperative work of the U.N. Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect on raising international awareness within the United Nations on situations where genocide and atrocity crimes are increasingly likely to place certain populations in extreme danger. The Office's early warning mechanism is essential in fostering international coordination to pre-emptively respond to genocidal crises around the world.

We would like to raise to the Office's attention the situation of Christians in Northern Nigeria and the Middle Belt who are a minority in the predominately Muslim North yet are overrepresented as victims of the brutal attacks taking place in the region. We fear the violence against the Christian community there has the potential to escalate to genocide should there be no preventive action on the part of the international human rights community- while there is some discord on whether the situation has already met the standards of genocide, it is generally agreed upon that such standards are likely to be reached or surpassed in a very short period of time, likely expedited without humanitarian intervention.

For a few weeks in late August and early September 2019, United Nations Special Rapporteur for Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions Agnes Callamard visited Nigeria to investigate "extreme situations of violations of the right to life by State and non-State actors" notably occurring in the North East and Middle Belt regions.¹ Special Rapporteur Callamard expressed "extreme concern" regarding the situation in Nigeria, explaining that the rate of killings has steadily increased over the past five years and has combined with lack of accountability, lack of

¹ Agnes Callamard, *End of visit statement of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions on her visit to Nigeria*, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2 September 2019, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24934&LangID=E>

access to protection, widespread displacement, and mistrust of security forces to foster a climate of insecurity and create a "dire humanitarian situation."

In a novel report released in May 2020 by Nigerian civil society organization [International Society for Civil Liberties & Rule of Law](#) (Intersociety), it is revealed that "no fewer than 32,000 defenseless Christians must have been hacked to death by Nigeria's main Islamic Jihadists in the past eleven years or 2009 to [the] end of 2020," and that such killings are attributed mainly to Boko Haram [along with offshoot group Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP)] and Muslim Fulani militant herders, who in addition engage in forceful abductions, sexual violence, and the destruction of their victims' communities.² In the first four months of 2020, Intersociety reported the brutal deaths of at least 620 Nigerian Christian men, women, and children.

The UK All Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief (APPG), also published a report in June 2020 titled [Nigeria: Unfolding Genocide?](#), in which they focus primarily on Fulani militant attacks on Christian communities throughout the northern Nigerian states of Plateau, Benue, Kaduna, Adamawa, Taraba, Zamfara, and Borno. They explain that, according to their findings, at least 6,000 Nigerian Christian deaths since 2015 can be attributed to Fulani militant attacks.³ Although, it should be noted that these statistics are conservative in comparison to other sources such as the Christian Association of Nigeria, which reports 6,000 deaths attributed to Fulani militant attacks in Nigeria in the first six months of 2018 alone.

The APPG reveals that, for the most part, Fulani militant attacks on Christian communities in the Middle Belt of Nigeria already exhibit some indicators that- according to the Office of the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide- increase the risk of genocide (OSAPG).⁴ Firstly, tension exists between the Fulani militants and the Christian farming communities historically as a result of contrasting claims of land ownership. This tension has expanded as Fulani militant attackers, predominantly Islamic jihadists, "have adopted a comparable strategy to Boko Haram and ISWAP and demonstrated a clear intent to target Christians and symbols of Christian identity such as churches,"⁵ and have planned their attacks to take place during Christian worship services and on specific religious leaders. This trend of intractable and interwoven tensions accounts for OSAPG Genocide Risk Factor 1 on "Inter-group relations," particularly focusing on tensions related to land, power, and "expressions of group identity, such language, religion and culture" which in combination greatly increase the risk of genocide. Secondly, Fulani militant attackers-

² International Society for Civil Liberties & Rule of Law, *Special Report: 620 Christians Hacked to Death By Nigerian Jihadists in 4 Months And 15 Days Of 2020*, 14 May 2020, available at: <http://intersociety-ng.org/site-administrator/downloads/category/4-intersociety-advocacy-news?download=802:620-christians-hacked-to-death-by-nigerian-jihadists-in-4-months-and-15-days-of-2020> [accessed 25 June 2020].

³ All Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief, *Nigeria: Unfolding Genocide? An Inquiry by the UK All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief*, 15 June 2020, available at: <https://appgfreedomofreligionorbelief.org/media/200615-Nigeria-Unfolding-Genocide-Report-of-the-APPG-for-FoRB.pdf> [accessed 25 June 2020].

⁴ Office of the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide (OSAPG), *Analysis Framework*, available at: https://www.un.org/ar/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/osapg_analysis_framework.pdf [accessed 2 June 2020].

⁵ All Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief, *Nigeria: Unfolding Genocide? An Inquiry by the UK All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief*, 15 June 2020, *supra* note 2.

unlike the Christian population which are often left unsuspecting of and defenseless during attacks - carry sophisticated weaponry which strengthen their destructive capacities, such as AK-47s, grenades, and rocket launchers, meeting OSAPG Genocide Risk Factor 3, "Presence of illegal arms and armed elements." The trend of the brutal slaughter and dismemberment of victims meets OSAPG Genocide Risk Factor 6 "Genocidal Acts," and the abduction and coerced religious conversion of Nigerian Christian girls by Boko Haram and occasionally Fulani militants meets the genocide standard "forcible transfer of children." Lastly, the ineffectiveness of under-resourced Nigerian security forces to successfully deescalate and mediate conflict, along with the local and national governments' failure to prosecute and punish perpetrators exhibit OSAPG Genocide Risk Factor 2, "Circumstances that affect the capacity to prevent genocide."

The International Committee on Nigeria (ICON) in 2020 also released a comprehensive report in collaboration with numerous human rights and faith-based organizations called *Nigeria's Silent Slaughter*, in which they convey the extreme severity of the situation through a conglomeration of legal briefs, submissions to the International Criminal Court, maps and statistics, photographs, incident reports and personal testimonies, making the irrefutable argument that "genocide is loading" in Nigeria.⁶ This report reveals pertinent information that proves that the risks factors of genocide are increasingly being met and exceeded as attacks in Northern Nigeria continue unabated: the general expansion of jihadist ideology in Nigeria [OSAPG Genocide Risk Factor 4]; the conflation of religious and land ownership tensions [OSAPG Genocide Risk Factor 1]; the presence of highly coordinated and pre-meditated "guerilla-style attacks" at the hands of Fulani militants; the incidence of rape and sexual violence against Christian women; the murder of pregnant and nursing mothers; the climate of impunity for attackers [OSAPG Genocide Risk Factor 2]; the widening geographic scope of attacks; and the sinister and horrific nature of the slaughter imposed indiscriminately on all age groups and genders of Nigerian Christian victims, which has left thousands dead and mutilated.

In light of the increasing genocidal trends in Nigeria, we collectively and respectfully request that you raise the probability of genocide in Nigeria with the United Nations Secretary-General. For the United Nations to spearhead the intervention and prevention of impending genocide is essential to generate international collaboration and a strategic plan of action involving governments, human rights organizations, religious leaders, and individual activists; Nigeria's multidimensional crisis demands an integrative response, and the United Nations' leadership on this issue is fundamental to resolving the situation before it becomes irreversible and irreparable beyond measure.

Respectfully signed with great appreciation for your attention to these matters,

⁶ International Committee on Nigeria and International Organisation for Peace Building and Social Justice, *Nigeria's Silent Slaughter: Genocide in Nigeria and the Implications for the International Community*, available at:

Organizations

Anglican Persecuted Church Network

Center for Pluralism

Christian Freedom International

Christian Solidarity Worldwide: Nigeria

Christian Solidarity Worldwide: UK

Christ's Mandate for Missions

Church of Scientology National Affairs Office

Conscience Coalition

Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience

Coptic Solidarity

Friends of Angola

GAFCON Suffering Church Network

Happy Science Washington Bureau

Institute on Religion and Democracy

International Campaign for the Rohingya

International Christian Foundation for Democracy

International Committee on Nigeria (ICON)

International Dialogue Research & Awareness Centre (IDRAC)

International Multi-Faith Coalition (IMFC)

International Organisation to Preserve Human Rights (IOPHR)

Iraqi Christian Relief Council

Jubilee Campaign USA

Law and Liberty International

Masjid, The Nation's Mosque

Minh Van Foundation

Religious Freedom Coalition

Save the Persecuted Christians

Shai Fund

Stefanos Foundation

The Bektashi Community of N. Macedonia

The World Headquarters of Bektashi Community

UNITED SIKHS

Uyghur Human Rights Project

West Papua Human Rights Center

Individuals

Elizabeth Yore

YoreChildren

Global Center for the Protection of Children

Scott Morgan

President

Red Eagle Enterprises

Dr. Muhammad Ilyas

Chairman

International Dialogue Research & Awareness Centre (IDRAC)

John Prabhudoss

Chairman

Federation of Indian American Christian Organizations (FIACONA)

Dr. Jianli Yang

Founder and President

Citizen Power Initiatives for China

Metodija A. Koloski

President

United Macedonian Diaspora

William J Murray

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Religious Freedom Coalition

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*Faith McDonnell
Director, International Religious Liberty Program
Institute on Religion and Democracy*