

**The Honorable Joseph Biden
President
The White House Office of the President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington DC 20500 USA**

Dear President Biden,

We, the undersigned, are a group of organizations and individuals, advocates, scholars, faith leaders, practitioners and non-practitioners that share a common interest in the promotion of universal human rights. We welcome that one of your first actions taken as the 46th President of the United States was to sign an executive order to reverse the proscription on Nigerians applying for permanent immigration visas to the United States.¹ Furthermore, prior to your election, in October 2020, you released a statement condemning the violence perpetrated by Nigerian military forces against peaceful police reform protesters and emphasizing the need for “a more just and inclusive Nigeria.”² We also note your commitment to re-engage with the United Nations Human Rights Council and urge you to take this opportunity to involve the international community meaningfully to address the reports of crimes against humanity and human rights violations in Nigeria.

Since 2009, USCIRF has designated Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) for failing to implement an effective strategy to prevent or stop violence towards religious communities or to hold perpetrators accountable; in 2020, the State Department followed through on the designation. In addition, the United Nations Special Rapporteur Agnès Callamard, in her end-of-visit statement following her trip to Nigeria in September 2019, reflected that “the farmer-herder conflict may have become or will become Nigeria’s gravest security challenge”, and pointed out multiple contributing factors, including deadly communal attacks, mass killings, and government reluctance to prosecute perpetrators.³

In January 2020, the Parliament of the European Union issued an official resolution condemning the attacks by Islamist jihadists such as Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) that have claimed thousands of Christian lives through executions and other acts of terrorism. The EU further noted the worsening internal displacement, poverty, and “shrinking humanitarian space” conditions in Nigeria. In December 2020, the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Ms. Fatou Bensouda, officially announced that a comprehensive investigation would be opened to analyze “acts constituting crimes against humanity and war crimes” that have occurred with impunity in Nigeria.⁴

¹ Timothy Obiezu, [“Nigerians Laud Biden Reversal of Trump’s Travel Ban on Muslim, African Countries”](#), *Voice of America*, 25 January 2021.

² [“Violence in Nigeria – Statement by Vice President Joe Biden”](#), JoeBiden.com, 20 October 2020.

³ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, [End of visit statement of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions on her visit to Nigeria](#), 2 September 2019.

⁴ Cour 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.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has confirmed that it is opening an investigation into the crimes against humanity that have taken place in Nigeria since 2010, but it is important to note that once formal investigations are concluded, the ICC will likely identify only a few individuals most directly responsible for the atrocities and proceed with a small handful of prosecutions. While we welcome these essential steps, our concern remains that they will not achieve full justice for all the survivors and families of victims, especially whereas certain complicit and indirectly responsible individuals will likely escape prosecution. This concern is only exacerbated by the fact that, despite an announcement of such a high-profile investigation, and despite international condemnation, the atrocities in Nigeria continue to this date with persistent brutality. Even though Nigeria has been in the spotlight of the ICC since 2010, the federal government has done little if anything to address the issue of the ever-growing impunity for the crimes perpetrated in Nigeria.

We strongly believe that there is a pressing necessity for UN-led independent investigations into the atrocities. Until such a body is established and collects evidence of all atrocities perpetrated by all actors, justice will remain an unattainable and improbable goal. A UN-mechanism could be established by either the Human Rights Council or General Assembly and would collect, analyze, and preserve evidence of atrocities for future prosecutions - whether by international, regional or domestic courts.

Similar mechanisms have successfully been established in the past for Syria, Myanmar, and most recently, for Sri Lanka. Perhaps one of the most successful commissions of inquiry established in recent years was that which investigated Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 2014. In addition to resolutely concluding that the government of North Korea had egregiously violated such human rights as religious freedom, freedom of movement, the right to food, and more, it brought to fruition the first ever UN Security Council meeting to address the situation of human rights in North Korea, and UN General Assembly resolution 60/188 condemning such rights violations. A similar commission of inquiry to investigate atrocities in Nigeria is both timely and necessary.

It is with consideration of the above that we respectfully urge you and your administration to introduce a resolution that would establish a UN-led commission of inquiry to investigate atrocities and crimes against humanity in Nigeria, especially as the United States re-engages with the United Nations; noting that it would provide much-needed evidence collection, preservation, and clarity to ensure effective action for the atrocities being committed in Nigeria, and to secure justice and accountability. The establishment of a commission of inquiry would further garner international interest in and concerted action regarding the situation in Nigeria.

With deepest appreciation for your attention to these matters,

Organizations

Jubilee Campaign

Anglican Persecuted Church Network

Christian Freedom International

Christian Medical Dental Associations
Citizen Power Initiatives for China
Freedom2Care
GAFCON Suffering Church Network
Human Rights Congress for Bangladesh Minorities (HRCBM)
Katartismos Global (KGI Global)
Law and Liberty International
Legalise Apostasy
Mission Africa International
New Wineskins Missionary Network
Orthodox Public Affairs Committee (OPAC)
Saint Nicholas Freedom Group
Save the Persecuted Christians
Set My People Free
United Macedonian Diaspora

Individuals

Father John Anderson
President
Saint Nicholas Freedom Group

Brian Britton
Director
Harvest Family Network

Jianli Yang
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Citizen Power Initiatives for China

Dr. Oluwasayo Ajiboye
Founder
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Director