



Jubilee Campaign Executive Director Ann Buwalda Testifies to House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing on Nigeria

Throughout the past month, the international human rights and religious freedom community has been buzzing about the state of affairs in Nigeria. On December 7, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that Nigeria would - for the first time - be classified as a Country of Particular Concern under the International Religious Freedom Act with regards to permitting rampant violations of religious freedom. Just four days later, **on December 11, Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Mrs. Fatou Bensouda, announced** that she has authorized her Office to proceed in initiating a comprehensive investigation into crimes against humanity and war crimes in Nigeria.

As fundamental progress is made, it is important that we continue to draw international attention to the negative developments as well. For instance, also on December 11, over **340 Nigerian schoolboys were abducted** from Katsina State's Government Science Secondary School. Days later, jihadist militant group Boko Haram took credit for the mass kidnapping. On December 18 the government of Nigeria reported that 344 boys were freed following negotiations. On December 1, suspected Fulani militants killed three Nigerian Christians during an attack on Plateau State's Gura-Pwana village. And on December 16, a Nigerian lawyer, his wife, and a blind civilian were killed in a Fulani militant attack in Makurdi, Benue State. **Even as progress is made on the international stage, we cannot ignore the human rights atrocities that continue unabated in Nigeria.**

Thursday December 17, Jubilee Campaign Executive Director Ann Buwalda testified to the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission's hearing *Conflict and Killings in Nigeria's Middle Belt*, hosted by Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Congressman Jim McGovern (D-MA). Ms. Buwalda highlighted the escalating violence against predominantly Christian farming communities by the hands of radial Fulani militants:



"Fulani militants pose a mortal threat to the predominantly Christian farming tribes in the Middle Belt and surrounding states, but the Nigerian government is failing both to protect the victims of Fulani militant violence and to bring the perpetrators to justice according to its duty. As a member of the Genocide Convention, it is time for the United States to place pressure on Nigeria to end the impunity and offer security to the victims in Nigeria vulnerable to Fulani militant attacks and violence."

Ann Buwalda, Executive Director, Jubilee Campaign

[Read Ann Buwalda's Full Statement Here](#)

Other notable speakers and witnesses include Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX-18), Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Mr. Robert Destro, Hudson Institute's Nina Shea, Baroness Caroline Cox Member of British House of Lords, Bishop H.E. William Avenya of Gboko, Nigeria, and more:



"To the President of Nigeria...a land that has such bounty...it is high time for the Nigerian government to take these conflicts seriously. I don't know how much longer the world can look to Nigeria for the future. All they see is internal bloodshed and a government that turns its back and its head."

Congresswoman Jackson Lee

"Nigeria is important in its own right. Precisely because we value Nigerians as partners and as people and as fellow human beings.... This hearing offers us an opportunity. That this is about civilian security. We have to start with civilian security because if there is no civilian security, there is no protection of human rights."

Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Mr. Robert Destro



"Christians and Muslims who reject extremist views, as well as humanitarian aid workers, are victims of Nigeria's radical terrorists.... Religion is not the sole driver, but a narrative that reduces the conflict to socio-economic factors such as climate change is an oversimplification. The scale and gravity of the religious context requires immediate attention."

Nina Shea, Director, Hudson Institute Center for Religious Freedom

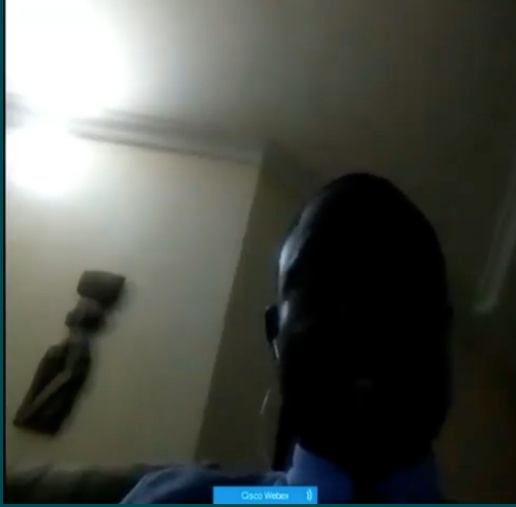
"It is something much more insidious. It is about a country that has lost its soul. A country numbed by violence inflamed by uncontained criminality and religious extremism.... I must also add that there is a need to amplify the voice of moderates across the divide in this conflict. We must amplify moderate voices for peacebuilding; violence cannot be solved by more violence."

Udo Jude Ilo, Open Society Initiative for West Africa



"It is depressing that our Middle Belt region has become a well of tears; an area where mass graves are common...where hundreds are killed in a single attack and no one says anything about it...The mass slaughter of Christians in Nigeria's middle belt by every standard meets the criteria of genocide within the Genocide Convention."

Bishop H.E. William Avenya of Gboko, Nigeria



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