



## Jubilee Campaign Responds Directly: To the Nigerian and Algerian Governments

Jubilee Campaign wishes a very happy holiday season to you and your family, and we hope that you will find a way to celebrate safely with your loved ones.

In the week leading up to Christmas, we will be updating you on Jubilee Campaign's biggest projects of 2021 and the various successes we made in the realm of international religious freedom. For the first time in over a year, we were able to meet with our colleagues in person at the inaugural IRF Summit in Washington, D.C., where we planned future advocacy initiatives, held an event, and made new friends and partners. We are fully prepared and excited to bring our advocacy plans to fruition in 2022!

### *Rejoinder to the Nigerian Government*

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In July 2021, renowned Nigerian Bishop of Sokoto, Matthew Hassan Kukah, spoke at a virtual event "The State of Religious Freedom Around the Globe" hosted by the United States Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission (TLHRC). Bishop Kukah eloquently shared his personal thoughts about the humanitarian situation in Nigeria, notably the mass abductions of young schoolchildren, the midnight killings of Christians and peaceful Muslims by radical bandits, the unequal skew by which Muslims occupy more governmental positions than Christians, and more. The Nigerian government, in response, castigated Bishop Kukah and misrepresented his remarks, stating that he sought to inflame ethnic tensions, exaggerate Nigeria's social problems, and claim that Christians were the sole victims of religious extremism and criminal activity. Jubilee Campaign submitted a rejoinder to the Nigerian presidential spokesperson in which we corrected the false accusations against Bishop Kukah, requested a retraction of the government's defamatory remarks, and urged the Nigerian government to take measurable steps to eradicate mass kidnappings; increase security in locations vulnerable to terror activities such as churches, Christian communities, and moderate Muslim communities; and ensure equitable representation in government roles.

**Rejoinder from Jubilee Campaign to Response by the [Nigerian] Presidency to the Statement Made by Bishop Kukah Before the United States Congress**

Jubilee Campaign promotes the human rights and religious liberty of ethnic and religious minorities, advocates for the release of prisoners of conscience imprisoned on account of their faith, assists refugees fleeing religious-based persecution, and protects and promotes the dignity and safety of children from bodily harm and sexual exploitation. Jubilee Campaign holds special consultative status with ECOSOC at the United Nations.

**I. Executive Summary**

We submit this rejoinder as a response to the Federal Government of Nigeria's Response by the Presidency to the Statement Made by Bishop Kukah Before the United States Congress<sup>1</sup>, in which the Nigerian government misrepresents and vilifies the remarks Bishop of Sokoto Matthew Hassan Kukah made as a panelist during the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission (TLHRC) virtual hearing "The State of Religious Freedom Around the Globe"<sup>2</sup> on 13 July 2021.<sup>3</sup> This rejoinder pulls information from both Bishop Kukah's oral remarks at the TLHRC hearing and his written testimony that he submitted to the record, though it is unclear whether the Presidential spokesperson Shehu's response was to Bishop Kukah's written submission, oral statement, or both.

Summary of claims made by the Nigerian presidential spokesperson, Mr. Garba Shehu, on behalf of the Federal Government of Nigeria and Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari:

- 1) Bishop Kukah is using his platform to sensationalize the issue of security in Nigeria and purposefully "scapegoat" the government.
- 2) Bishop Kukah is misrepresenting the situation in Nigeria by claiming that Christian students and schools are the only institutions affected by abductions and violence.
- 3) Bishop Kukah's statement contributed less to raising the situation of insecurity in Nigeria and more to exacerbating ethnic and religious tensions.
- 4) Bishop Kukah's remarks do not represent the views of Nigerian citizens.

<sup>1</sup> Premium Times Nigeria, "Disillusion attacks Bishop Kukah over statement to U.S. Congress", 18 July 2021.  
<sup>2</sup> Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission (virtual hearing), "The State of Religious Freedom Around the Globe", 13 July 2021.

\*\*\*Click on the above graphic to view in a separate browser\*\*\*

## Rejoinder to the Algerian Government

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Regrettably, thirteen Protestant houses of worship in Algeria remained closed throughout 2020 that had originally been arbitrarily shut down in 2017 and 2019, and religious freedom conditions continued on a downward trend. However, in January 2021, the Algerian government denied all allegations of engaging in discriminatory or unfair behavior. Jubilee Campaign fought back by publishing a rejoinder which lists all of the Algerian government's activities that violate freedom of religion or belief. Perhaps the most restrictive is Ordinance 06-03 which criminalizes all acts of peaceful proselytism by non-Muslim civilians towards Muslims; moreover, the Algerian Penal Code contains provisions criminalizing acts of blasphemy. By extension, any non-Muslim Algerian individual who is accused of blasphemy or evangelism can face up to five years in prison and a hefty fine. These harsh punishments are imposed on individuals who have exercised their right to freedom of religion, which is ironically outlined in Algeria's Constitution of 1989. With regards to the regulation of Protestant Churches, the aforementioned Ordinance 06-03 places tremendous obstacles Ordinance to the establishment of non-Muslim faith communities and their houses of worship, such as that they must register with the National Commission for Non-Muslim Religious Groups and submit applications for building permits to construct churches. The Commission, however, has yet to issue a single permit, much to the chagrin of the Protestant Church of Algeria who has been submitting building applications routinely since 2014. Even houses of worship that have been peacefully operating for years have been shut down on allegations that their buildings are not meeting safety regulations; yet, even when improvements are made to meet such standards, the government once again denies their appeals to reopen.



**Rejoinder from Jubilee Campaign to Response of the Government of Algeria to allegations concerning the closure of Protestant churches and places of worship**

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**I. Executive Summary**

We submit this rejoinder as a response to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria Permanent Mission of Algeria to the United Nations Office at Geneva's reply to the UN experts' communication addressing and requesting information regarding the Algerian authorities' closure of churches in December last year. The Algerian government's response was published 21 January 2021.<sup>1</sup>

Summary of claims made by the Government of Algeria:

- 1) Religious freedom is a fundamental principle that is respected, protected, and embraced by both the citizens and the government of Algeria.
- 2) The 13 Protestant Churches closed in 2019 remain closed due to failure to comply with health and safety requirements as well as permit requisites.
- 3) Establishment, opening, and regulation of houses of worship is conducted in accordance with the principle of non-discrimination based on religion or belief.
- 4) The re-opening of houses of worship during the COVID-19 pandemic is conducted in accordance with the principle of non-discrimination based on religion or belief.

<sup>1</sup> People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, Permanent Mission of Algeria to the United Nations Office at Geneva and the International Organizations in Switzerland, Response of the Government of Algeria concerning the closure of Protestant churches and places of worship, 21 January 2021.

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## Jubilee Campaign Newsletter: Rejoinders



**Rejoinders: Nigeria and Algeria**

**TO THE NIGERIAN PRESIDENCY**

In July 2021, renowned Nigerian Bishop of Sokoto, Matthew Hassan Kukah, spoke at a virtual event "The State of Religious Freedom Around the Globe" hosted by the United States Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission (TLHRC). Bishop Kukah eloquently shared his personal thoughts about the humanitarian situation in Nigeria, notably the mass abductions of young schoolchildren, the midnight killings of Christians and peaceful Muslims by radical bandits, the unequal skew by which Muslims occupy more governmental positions than Christians, and more. The Nigerian government, in response, castigated Bishop Kukah and misrepresented his remarks, stating that he sought to inflame ethnic tensions, exaggerate Nigeria's social problems, and claim that Christians were the sole victims of religious extremism and criminal activity. Jubilee Campaign submitted a rejoinder to the Nigerian presidential spokesperson in which we corrected the false accusations against Bishop Kukah, requested a retraction of the government's defamatory remarks, and urged the Nigerian government to take measurable steps to eradicate mass kidnappings, increase security in locations vulnerable to terror activities such as churches, Christian communities, and moderate Muslim communities; and ensure equitable representation in government roles.

**TO THE ALGERIAN GOVERNMENT**

Regrettably, thirteen Protestant houses of worship in Algeria remained closed throughout 2020 that had originally been arbitrarily shut down in 2017 and 2019, and religious freedom conditions continued on a downward trend. However, in January 2021, the Algerian government denied all allegations of engaging in discriminatory or unfair behavior. Jubilee Campaign fought back by publishing a rejoinder which lists all of the Algerian government's activities that violate freedom of religion or belief. Perhaps the most restrictive is Ordinance 06-03 which criminalizes all acts of peaceful proselytism by non-Muslim civilians towards Muslims; moreover, the Algerian Penal Code contains provisions criminalizing acts of blasphemy. By extension, any non-Muslim Algerian individual who is accused of blasphemy or evangelism can face up to five years in prison and a hefty fine. These harsh punishments are imposed on individuals who have exercised their right to freedom of religion, which is enshrined in Algeria's Constitution of 1989. With regards to the regulation of Protestant Churches, the aforementioned Ordinance 06-03 places tremendous obstacles to the establishment of non-Muslim faith communities and their houses of worship, such as that they must register with the National Commission for Non-Muslim Religious Groups and submit applications for building permits to construct churches. The Commission, however, has yet to issue a single permit, much to the chagrin of the Protestant Church of Algeria who has been submitting building applications routinely since 2014. Even houses of worship that have been peacefully operating for years have been shut down on allegations that their buildings are not meeting safety regulations, yet, even when improvements are made to meet such standards, the government once again denies their appeals to reopen.

*"Bishop Kukah in his remarks at the TLHRC hearing did not make any attempt to use religious differences as a means to divide the Nigerian populace or sow strife, contrary to what Presidential spokesperson Garba Shehu claimed. In fact, Bishop Kukah made numerous statements appealing for the collaboration between faith communities for a peaceful and harmonious future."*

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**Please consider making a Christmas or year-end financial donation to Jubilee Campaign so that we can continue our crucial religious freedom and human rights advocacy in 2022!**

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