

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

The Honorable Marco A. Rubio  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We write to urge you to consider designating Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) pursuant to the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA)<sup>1</sup> to give the President additional authority to take specific actions to address the continued unchecked acts of violence and terrorism against religious minorities perpetrated by nonstate actors in Nigeria.

As you know, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo designated Nigeria as a CPC in December 2020<sup>2</sup>, for the ongoing and egregious violations of religious freedom perpetrated within its borders, particularly by nonstate actors such as Boko Haram and other terrorist groups<sup>3</sup>.

While Secretary of State Antony Blinken removed Nigeria from the CPC list in 2021, on March 25, 2025, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) recommended that Nigeria be placed once again on the CPC list, citing several incidents of violence and terrorism against religious minorities:

In May 2024, al-Qaeda-affiliated Ansaru gunmen reportedly kidnapped 160 mainly Christian children and killed eight people in Niger State but later released the abducted children....in Niger State, suspected bandits killed 10 farmers, including Christians, and in August, bandits reportedly killed 70 Christians and kidnapped 20 students in separate attacks in Benue State<sup>4</sup>

Most recently, in late June 2025, reports suggest that at least 200 Christians in Nigeria were brutally killed by terrorists in Benue state<sup>5</sup>. This same report suggests that Nigeria is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be Christian, citing 3,100 of the 4,476 Christians killed during their reporting period lived in Nigeria.

As you know, on May 1, 2025, President Trump issued an executive order to establish the Religious Liberty Commission with the intent for this commission to vigorously enforce the historic and robust protections for religious liberty enshrined in Federal law and to work with the White House Faith Office to partner with the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom to further the cause of religious liberty around the world<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> 22 U.S.C. § 6442

<sup>2</sup> Laura Kelly, *Nigeria joins State Dept list of violators of religious freedom*, THE HILL (December 7, 2020), <https://thehill.com/policy/international/529121-nigeria-joins-state-dept-list-of-violators-of-religious-freedom/>.

<sup>3</sup> United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, *2025 Annual Report* (March 2025), <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/2025%20USCIRF%20Annual%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Tilsley, *Pope, State Department Condemn Latest Massacre of Christians by Islamist Militants in Nigeria*, FOX NEWS (July 1, 2025), <https://www.foxnews.com/world/pope-state-department-condemn-latest-massacre-christians-islamist-militants-nigeria>

<sup>6</sup> Exec. Order No. 14291, *Establishment of the Religious Liberty Commission* (May 1, 2025), 90 Fed. Reg. 19417 (May 7, 2025).

On September 23, 2019, President Trump issued a global call to condemn religious persecution and defend the freedom of all believers stating that:

“Today with one clear voice, the United States of America calls upon the nations of the world to end religious persecution. To stop crimes against people of faith, release prisoners of conscience, repeal laws restricting freedom of religion and belief...America stands with believers in every country who ask only for the freedom to live according to the faith that is within their own hearts<sup>7</sup>.”

We are grateful for President Trump and your work to champion our founding freedoms at home, as well as to condemn religious persecution around the world. We hope you will carefully consider designating Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) pursuant to the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Ted Budd  
United States Senator



Pete Ricketts  
United States Senator



Josh Hawley  
United States Senator



Ted Cruz  
United States Senator



James Lankford  
United States Senator

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Global Call to Protect Religious Freedom* (September 23, 2019), <https://2017-2021.state.gov/a-global-call-to-protect-religious-freedom/>.