

## **Christian Today**

### [Nigeria's Christians Are Being Silently Slaughtered](#)

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Ninety-one million Christians live in Nigeria. They make up around 46 per cent of the total population of 196 million. There are a similar number of Muslims in Nigeria – over 90 million.

In Nigeria, Africa's largest economy, the majority of Christians live in the south of the country, and their religious freedom is respected. But in the north of Nigeria and the 'Middle Belt', where Christians are in the minority, they face horrific levels of persecution at the hands of Islamic extremists.

The militant group Boko Haram have abducted and killed those who refuse to conform to their extremist brand of Islam. Attacks by armed groups of Muslim Fulani herdsmen have resulted in the killing, maiming, dispossession and eviction of thousands of Christians. Innocent and vulnerable girls such as Leah Sharibu, whose mother visited London in February to plead Boris Johnson for help, have spent their early adulthood as slaves and denied basic human rights, captive to a resurgent ISIS.

Twelve of the nineteen northern states are under Sharia (Islamic law), and Christians in these states face discrimination. The Global Terrorism Index in 2016 and 2017 named Fulani militia as the fourth deadliest terrorist group in the world, with only Boko Haram, ISIS and al-Shabab being accounted deadlier.

In 2019, an estimated over 1000 Christians were slaughtered in North-Eastern Nigeria. This is in addition to over 6000 deaths since 2015.

As International Christian Concern shows, in the first three months of 2020, there have been 200 violent incidents involving terrorist or militant groups throughout Nigeria. These three brutal months also saw 766 deaths related to terror or militant activity, with Christians farmers making up the highest number of casualties after Boko Haram terrorists and military personnel are factored in.

Shockingly for a key Commonwealth member with so many Christians, Nigeria ranks twelfth on Open Doors World Watch List 2020 of the countries in which Christians are most persecuted. By comparison, Syria ranks eleventh and Saudi Arabia ranks thirteenth, with Iraq fifteenth and Egypt sixteenth. Nigeria is currently just one rank below 'extreme'.

The difficult situation for persecuted Christians is compounded by the hostile media context. Reporters Without Borders ranks Nigeria 120 out of 180 countries for press freedom, noting a 'climate of permanent violence'. It places just above Afghanistan.

A resulting lack of transparency makes it harder to expose endemic corruption. The Corruption Perceptions Index 2019 ranked Nigeria at 146th in the world - two places lower than 2018 - scoring an abysmal 26 points out of a possible 100, level with Iran. The silence surrounding the slaughter, however, is felt just as painfully in the Western media.

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The humanitarian organisation I lead, PSJ UK, is working tirelessly to stop this impending genocide. We recently launched a global social media campaign, 'Silent Slaughter', reaching millions worldwide in a bid to make the Nigerian and Western governments listen to the cry of our Christian brothers and sisters. Please visit our site and give your support to stop this wicked mayhem.

Since the Bishop of Truro's full report on Christian persecution around the world, which was commissioned by former Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), interest in the cause is rising fast among political actors.

PSJ UK's campaign builds on the Prime Minister's Christmas message, which vowed to defend persecuted Christians around the world, and the promises of the FCO to implement the Bishop of Truro's recommendations, which have been taken on by the PM's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion and Belief Rehman Chishti.

It is our responsibility to hear their cry and project it to the world. In your prayer and conversation please remember the martyrs of Nigeria, and as we are woken up one by one to the catastrophe, refuse to shroud this slaughter in silence.

*Ayo Adedoyin is Chief Executive of PSJ UK, a humanitarian organisation campaigning against the persecution of Christians in Nigeria*