

## **The Threat of Genocide Darkens the Future for Nigeria's Christians**

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Today, a dangerous darkness—radical Islamism and its genocidal intentions—is sweeping across the African continent. And it is particularly lethal in Nigeria, Africa's largest nation.

In short, there is a bloodbath in Nigeria. And those of us who track religious freedom violations and Christian persecution are alarmed, because it seems increasingly clear that another genocide is already taking place. We know what happened in Rwanda. We saw what ISIS did in Iraq. And in recent decades, tens of thousands of Nigerians have been slaughtered. Yet their stories rarely appear in mainstream Western news reports, while virtually nothing is being done to stop the violence.

Two factions of Islamist jihadis are primarily responsible for the carnage.

One is the notorious terrorist group, Boko Haram—one faction of which has now aligned itself with the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Today, Boko Haram continues to hold Leah Sharibu, an enslaved Christian teenager who has refused to deny her faith.

On June 22, The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom ([USCIRF](#)) [denounced recent attacks by the Boko Haram](#) faction ISWAP against innocent civilians in northern Nigeria.

"Recent ISWAP attacks on innocent civilians are reprehensible," said USCIRF Vice Chair [Anurima Bhargava](#). "Hundreds have died in recent weeks as ISWAP continues to inflict terror and target civilians based on their beliefs. We condemn this deplorable violence."

The report goes on to say, "Earlier this month, suspected ISWAP fighters killed [81 people](#) when they attacked Foduma Kolomaiya village in northeast Nigeria. ISWAP then claimed responsibility for [twin attacks](#) that killed 20 soldiers and more than 40 civilians in Borno State on June 13."

Another brutal Nigerian faction is often identified by the innocent-sounding name, "Fulani Herdsmen." Initially, their violence was attributed to attempts to confiscate grazing land for their animals. However, because of ever-increasing evidence of carnage, outrageous brutality, and shouts of *allah hu akbar*, the Fulanis' jihadi intentions have been clearly exposed.

Earlier this month, a report from Nigeria by the [Christian Post](#) was accompanied by a photo of a Nigerian Christian pastor who was gunned down, along with his wife, while working on their farm in the Taraba State of Nigeria. The couple left eight children orphaned, ages 1 to 19.

Just days before, [CNN reported](#), "Uwaila Vera Omozuwa was attacked as she studied in church, according to Nigerian police. The 22-year-old died on May 30, just days after the brutal assault inside the church of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, or RCCG, in Benin city... Omozuwa was a member of the choir who had studied privately at the church since lockdown measures due to the coronavirus pandemic were put in place in Nigeria in March."

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Week after week such stories appear, primarily in Christian publications. Usually the killers are identified but not always. And unfortunately, no one really knows the precise numbers of Nigeria's victims either, thanks to mass graves, torched villages, chaotic aftermaths, and disappearances. Still, the numbers we've seen are horrifying.

To make matters even more disturbing, there is mounting evidence that the present government of Nigeria is somehow complicit in the Islamist groups' assaults. While tens of thousands of Nigeria's Christians have been killed in recent decades, countless more have been mercilessly raped, maimed, disfigured, and disabled. And the displaced are innumerable.

In 2018, President Donald Trump [raised this issue](#) with Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari. "We've had very serious problems with Christians who have been murdered, killed in Nigeria," Trump told reporters, with Buhari seated next to him. "We're going to be... working on that problem very, very hard because we can't allow that to happen."

The remark seems to have fallen on deaf ears.

However, religious freedom researchers and activists continue to pursue accurate fact-finding mechanisms, consistent documentation, and an official U.S. envoy to specifically address this travesty. More and more concerned voices—including USCIRF—are demanding accountability from Nigeria's leadership and are seeking an effective response from the U.S. government.

But meanwhile, as we watch and wait, we also need to fervently pray for spiritual intervention. Because the more time that passes, the deeper the darkness grows, and it threatens to decimate Nigeria's Christian believers.