

July 6, 2020

Honorable Michael Pompeo
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

We write to you as the United States coordinators for the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), an organization that represents the social, political, and economic interests of Biafrans in Nigeria. As Biafrans who live and work in America but remain immensely concerned about the state of our homeland, we urge you to consider appointing a Special Envoy to the Lake Chad region who can hold the Nigerian government accountable for its harmful actions and equally detrimental inaction. Biafrans are being mercilessly slaughtered on a daily basis in Nigeria and absent urgent action by the international community, persistent violence and human rights violations will further erode democratic norms in Nigeria and jeopardize the United States' strategic interest in a stable African continent.

In recent years, thousands of Biafran Christians have been murdered by Fulani extremists, a group that in 2019 the Global Terrorism Index suggested was even deadlier than Boko Haram. Open Doors USA's 2020 World Watch List report on religious freedom indicated that in 2019, more Christians were killed for practicing their faith in Nigeria than in any other country in the world. This spring, we called attention to these atrocities in a series of letters to our representatives in Congress, which highlighted that over the past five years, there has been a significant increase in criminality and spreading insecurity across Nigeria.

These issues have been compounded by the Nigerian government's inability and unwillingness to hold violent perpetrators accountable for their actions. In its 2019 Nigeria Human Rights Report, the U.S. Department of State found that state and non-state actors participated in extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, torture, and arbitrary detentions and that while "the [Nigerian] government took some steps to investigate alleged abuses, there were few public reports of prosecutions of officials who committed violations, whether in the security forces or elsewhere in the government." Highly reputable non-governmental organizations like *Human Rights Watch*¹ and *Amnesty International*² have also specifically reported on the Nigerian government's inability to protect Biafran citizens, leading to the deaths of thousands.

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¹ [Human Rights Watch, "Nigeria: Disturbing Intolerance of Dissent," 12 Jan 2017.](#)

² [Amnesty International, "Nigeria: At Least 150 Peaceful Pro-Biafra Activists Killed In Chilling Crackdown," 24 Nov 2016.](#)

Our concerns have also been echoed by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for International Freedom of Religion or Belief, a group of British lawmakers from across the ideological spectrum established to raise awareness of and defend against religious freedom abuses around the world. Last month, the APPG released a report titled, *Nigeria: Unfolding Genocide*, which provided recommendations to prevent the persecution of Christians in Nigeria.

While the report noted that issues like resource competition, population growth, and climate change have contributed to the farmer-herder conflict, it highlighted extremist ideology and government mismanagement as the main sources of conflict, emphasizing, “the inability of the Nigerian Federal and State Governments to protect Christian farmers, and the lack of political will to respond adequately to warnings or to bring perpetrators of violence to justice, has fostered feelings of victimization and persecution.” We believe a similar study conducted by the State Department or the Congressional International Religious Freedom Caucus could be valuable in bringing attention to the severely underreported issue in the United States.

We understand that Senator Joni Ernst and Senator Kelly Loeffler have sent a letter to President Donald Trump asking that the United States protect Christians in Biafra and across Nigeria by appointing a Special Envoy to the Lake Chad region. The IPOB strongly supports this request, as we believe the only way to prevent the Nigerian government from allowing these attacks and human rights violations to continue with impunity is rigorous oversight conducted by a well-respected third party, like a Special Envoy. People around the world look to the United States as a defender of human rights and democratic values, and we strongly believe that American oversight in the region would promote stability and save lives.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Biafran War, a conflict in which upwards of three million innocent civilians were killed. At the peak of the atrocities, 12,000 people a day starved to death in Biafra at the hands of the Nigerian government. We hope that atrocities of this magnitude are never repeated, but fear that Biafran lives will continue to be imperiled until decisive actions are taken. That is why we humbly request your support for the appointment of a Special Envoy to the Lake Chad region to ensure regional stability, enhance U.S. interests, and end the senseless loss of human life.

Sincerely,

Dr. Clement Okoro
United States National Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mazi Sylvester Njoku
Alabama Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Oriaku Nkem Akpa
Arizona Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mazi Ndubuisi Chijioke
California Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mrs. Latina McPeters
Colorado Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Dr. Raymond Ogum
Connecticut Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Dr. Godfrey Friday Alozie
Delaware Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mazi Onyema Onozie
Florida Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mazi Uche Nwokenkwo
Georgia Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mazi Samsom Ememandu
Illinois Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mazi Afam Olisa
Indiana Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Father Anthony Chukwunaeke Adibe
Iowa Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Dr. Ewa Unoke
Kansas Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mazi Uchenna Osoro
Kentucky Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mazi Oliver Obi
Maryland Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mazi Tochuwku Ikwuanusi
Massachusetts Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mazi Ndidi Awurum
Michigan Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Pastor Titus Jideofor
Minnesota Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mazi Christopher Onuwa
Missouri Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mazi Chidozie Onyemelukwe
New Hampshire Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mazi Chijioke Onyechege
New Jersey Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mazi Hygenius Offor
New Mexico Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mazi David Ezekwesili
New York Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mazi Ugochukwu Okafor
North Carolina State Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Uju Okwumabua
Ohio Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Blessing Njeje
Oklahoma Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mazi Chika Amukamara
Oregon Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Father Benjamin Nwanonyi
Pennsylvania Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Ndubueze Ejiasi
Texas Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mazi Paul Ezieme
Virginia Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

High Chief Lucky Ogbuefi
Washington DC Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mazi Eddie Nnadi
Washington State Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra

Mrs. Lillian Chime Ndu
Wisconsin Coordinator
Indigenous People of Biafra