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Subject: Where in the World Is James Barnett? Nina Shea Hosts a Nigeria "Briefing"—Minus Hudson's Top Nigeria Expert

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Where in the World Is James Barnett? Nina Shea Hosts a Nigeria "Briefing"— Minus Hudson's Top Nigeria Expert



Have you seen this man? James Barnett, Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute, is missing. He was last seen articulating a fact-based analysis of Nigeria's security situation.

Maybe that's exactly why Nina Shea, Director of Hudson's Center for Religious Freedom, didn't invite him to her invite-only, closed-door "[briefing](#)" on Nigeria. With a panel featuring Judd Saul, former Ambassador Tibor Nagy, Matthew Boyce, and Rev. Fr. Remigius Ihyula, the "briefing" is less a briefing than an echo chamber—professional activists reciting pro-Biafran talking points while decrying President Tinubu's successful efforts to fight terrorism and protect Christians.

So why wasn't Barnett invited? Perhaps because he sees Nigeria's security situation for what it is—and, more importantly, for what it is not. Barnett doesn't just reject "Christian Genocide" narratives; he understands that religion plays no role in the country's security challenges and that pushing this propaganda plays right into terrorists' hands. Having lived in Lagos, it's no wonder he's so clear-eyed:

"The country's violence cannot be reduced to a single religious divide or ethnic group. Nigeria is facing multiple, distinct yet sometimes overlapping conflicts in nearly every sub-national division of the country. These conflicts involve a wide range of non-state armed groups... that are frequently motivated by different community-based grievances as well as political and economic objectives."

Barnett doesn't stop there. He details exactly how false genocide narratives serve the terrorists: *"the jihadi groups themselves employ simplistic and reductive narratives of Nigerian religious identities to justify their violence and appeal to new recruits."*

To be clear, Barnett rightly acknowledges that Christians have been targeted by terrorists—a fact the Nigerian government itself routinely recognizes. But unlike many U.S. activists, he sees the full picture: *"I have also seen the impact of similarly horrific violence across Muslim communities. To ignore the latter is to misunderstand what is really going on."*

And on why getting the diagnosis right matters, Barnett is wiser still: *"Emphasizing nuance when discussing violence of the scale and nature that Nigeria has been experiencing is not always appealing... The nuance is important for many reasons, however, not least among them because our diagnosis of the problem has tangible implications for which solutions are pursued."*

Thankfully, President Trump and his advisors understand this complexity. Their decision to lean in and enhance collaboration with Nigeria has yielded significant counterterrorism victories, including the elimination of more than 200 ISIS fighters and ISIS global leader Abu-Bilal al-Minuki. That cooperation continues through the U.S.-Nigeria Working Group, which met in Washington, DC just this month.

This progress is precisely what makes Barnett's absence from the panel so troubling. These hand-picked panelists want President Trump to premise U.S. policy toward Nigeria on disinformation—propaganda that could lead to the breakup of Nigeria, a disastrous outcome for U.S. national security and for Nigerian Christians alike. They support conditioning and/or halting all U.S. security assistance to Nigeria, a move that would completely undercut the counterterrorism gains President Tinubu's security surge is making in the North Central States. In short, it seems they aren't really interested in protecting Nigerian Christians at all.

Nina Shea has built her career, from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom to Hudson, on pushing a "Christian Genocide" narrative in Nigeria. Yet for all her writings and advocacy, real progress came only when President Trump took a page out of her colleague's playbook and approached the situation with the seriousness and nuance it deserves.

Maybe Nina Shea should start listening to James Barnett. We do hope she finds him soon.

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