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Sent: Thursday, September 3, 2026 12:31 PM
To:
Subject: Two Hours, Zero Experts: The Hudson Institute's Nina Shea Hosts a Masterclass in Narrative Over Evidence

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**Two Hours, Zero Experts: The Hudson
Institute's Nina Shea Hosts a Masterclass in
Narrative Over Evidence**



Last week's [Hudson Institute](#) event on Nigeria's security situation was certainly illuminating — just not in the way its organizers intended.

Anyone hoping to learn about the actual drivers of intercommunal violence was out of luck; Nina Shea's panelist lineup made sure of that. Instead, two hours of monologuing from professional activists like Judd Saul and former Ambassador Tibor Nagy revealed just how far they will go to bury an inconvenient truth: President Tinubu's security surge, alongside the U.S.–Nigeria Counterterrorism Partnership, is actively tackling Nigeria's complex security challenges and protecting vulnerable Nigerians. Naturally, none of that came up.

The caliber of the panel, such as it was, made the whole affair feel farcical — but even unserious self-aggrandizing has consequences. Trading on Hudson's illustrious legacy, these self-styled "experts" whisper their talking points to lawmakers, who [then draft legislation](#) that threatens to harm the very people they claim to protect: Nigerian Christians.

So this isn't just about correcting the record. It's about dismantling the machinery that keeps the "Christian genocide" narrative alive and well in Washington, despite the mountain of evidence against it.

For viewers who walked away wondering what, exactly, they had just watched — and for anyone unfamiliar with the full scope of Nigeria's security landscape — we're taking this misinformation apart, piece by piece.

Shea and Saul Reveal the "Data Collection" Behind the "Christian Genocide" Narrative

It's no wonder that [James Barnett](#), Hudson's resident Nigeria expert, was not invited to participate. Had he been in the room, he would have made quick work of Nina Shea's unscientific explanation for the causes of violence in Nigeria. Barnett has repeatedly described the complexity of that violence: [*"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."

It seems ACLED — the "[most trusted source for gathering conflict data](#)," by Shea's own admission — agrees with Barnett. At the top of the panel, Shea recounted corresponding with ACLED's founder to ask why the organization does not record victims' religious affiliations.

The answer Shea shared from ACLED's founder was an admonishment: "[Of course, ACLED does not include religion. Such data would be false, biased, and unverified. Most frequently, it is not known what the religion of either the perpetrators or the victims is in the tens of thousands of events we collect from Nigeria each year. This is both unknown and unknowable.](#)"

Undeterred, Shea continues to insist that religion is the only factor at play. So how do she and her comrades collect this unknowable data? Judd Saul attempted to answer that question, and his response left us more confused than before:

["So when there's an attack, we send a journalist... We ask the questions: 'Who killed you? By the way, are you Christian? What churches do you go to?'"](#)

Where to even begin. With that kind of journalistic rigor, it's not surprising that TruthNigeria.com never seems to account for the [Muslims](#) who have been targeted, or to acknowledge the cases in which [Christian farmers](#) initiated the violence. If you are looking for facts over hearsay, go to [Truthnigeria.ORG](#) to learn more.

This approach isn't just silly — it's dangerous. By artificially imposing a religious frame on socioeconomic and ethnic disputes, Shea and Saul are playing directly into the terrorists' hands. As Barnett has explained, "[the jihadi groups themselves employ simplistic and reductive narratives of Nigerian religious identities to justify their violence and appeal to new recruits.](#)"

They are also inflaming religious tensions in a diverse country where Muslims and Christians have not merely lived side by side peacefully for generations, but intermarry and share their lives together. As Alex Barbir's [inflammatory rhetoric](#) after the alleged Plateau attack demonstrated, this has consequences: Barbir's social media [posting incited further violence](#), leading to the deaths of two innocents in a reprisal attack and prompting his expulsion from the country.

And as international observers saw in Rwanda in 1994, exacerbating religious and ethnic sectarianism carries deadly consequences— the very kind of violence President Tinubu and his security forces are actively working to prevent by securing the safety and prosperity of all Nigerians, Muslim, Christian, or otherwise.

If only Barnett had been allowed to share this essential perspective.

Shea and Saul Dodge the Biafra Question While Repeating Pro-Separatist Talking Points

Of course, Shea and Saul didn't stop there. The discussion also brought to light their barely concealed sympathy for the Biafran separatist movement — a movement

affiliated with violent armed groups, including [IPOB and the Eastern Security Network](#), that push for the breakup of Nigeria and have actively targeted both Christians and U.S. Embassy personnel.

On the event's first panel, former U.S. Ambassador Tibor Nagy Jr. brought this long-held belief into the open, voicing his support for Biafran independence: "[There's a growing dissension of the people who live there \[Biafra\], majority Igbos who are overwhelmingly Christian. There's an organization, Indigenous People of Biafra \(IPOB\), which would like to recreate the formal state of Biafra... The people in the region feel like second-class citizens. They're suffering from security force abuses, and they also have a perception of Islamization by the federal government of Nigeria.](#)"

Ambassador Nagy followed his appearance by posting a [photo](#) on X alongside the "Prime Minister" of the supposed Biafran Republic Government in Exile (BRGIE).

Is Ambassador Nagy aware that [IPOB and the Eastern Security Network](#) have repeatedly targeted and killed Nigerian Christians? Is he aware that the breakup of Nigeria would put Nigerian Christians squarely in harm's way — and hand power to a group that has allegedly killed U.S. Embassy personnel?

Shea and Saul, it seems, preferred not to address this reality. When an audience member [tried to ask](#) about violent Christian separatists attacking fellow Christians, Shea attempted to shut the question down, then simply moved on to another audience member in lieu of a response.

This isn't because Shea and Saul understand the dangers of Biafran separatism. Quite likely the opposite: they cannot acknowledge that Christian militants are also perpetrating violence, because it doesn't fit their narrative.

Here again is a conversation where Barnett's expertise would have been useful. No wonder he wasn't invited.

The Facts That Somehow Didn't Make the Two-Hour Program

For all the noise and nonsense packed into the discussion, what's most remarkable is what went unmentioned.

No mention of the many successes of President Tinubu's [security surge](#), which arrested over 1,334 terrorists, neutralized 217 more, and rescued 383 kidnap victims in intelligence-led operations in July and August 2026 alone.

Barely a nod to the U.S.–Nigeria Counterterrorism Partnership, which eliminated over [200 ISIS fighters](#) — including global ISIS leader Abu-Bilal al-Minuki — in joint operations last May.

And nothing but a passing reference to the Joint U.S.–Nigeria Working Group, which met in Washington, D.C. this August. There, according to a State Department press release, "[Under Secretary Hooker met with NSA Ribadu to further advance bilateral priorities and reaffirm the United States' commitment to working with Nigeria to protect Christian communities and to deepen joint security cooperation.](#)"

We know why these facts didn't come up. They don't — and never will — fit Shea and Saul's narrative of a fake "Christian genocide," because President Tinubu's security surge and the U.S.–Nigeria Counterterrorism Partnership are making real strides in rooting out terrorists and protecting Nigerian Christians.

It's a shame Nina Shea and her cohort of professional activists can't acknowledge this reality, or even engage with experts like James Barnett who can. The Hudson Institute does employ scholars who understand the nuance of Nigeria's security situation. We hope it will elevate those voices in the future, rather than hosting echo chambers where professional activists regurgitate pro-Biafra propaganda.

Such a shame.

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