

January 15, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Secretary Blinken:

Your refusal to designate Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern (“CPC”) for severe violations of religious freedom is completely unconscionable.

Less than two weeks ago, almost 200 Nigerian Christians became martyrs while celebrating Christmas. According to one account, these Christians were “killed for sport.”<sup>1</sup> Just weeks earlier, the Christian Association of Nigeria received a letter threatening them against celebrating Christmas.<sup>2</sup>

### **If this is not religious persecution, then what is?**

The International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law (Intersociety), a Nigeria-based non-profit, has found that more than 52,000 Christians have been killed and more than 14 million Christians have been forced to flee Nigeria since 2009. Over that same period, Intersociety also found that 18,000 churches and 2,200 schools have been attacked.<sup>3</sup>

### **Again - if this is not religious persecution, then what is?**

The international religious freedom community stands outraged at your refusal to hold these acts of evil to account. Within hours of your announcement, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (“USCIRF”) called for a congressional hearing, and international religious freedom advocates publicly criticized your decision.<sup>4567</sup>

While the Trump-Pence Administration designated Nigeria as a CPC, your administration has reversed this designation without explanation as to why the slaughter of Nigerian Christians is not “of Particular Concern” to the U.S. Department of State.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Tilsley, “World looks other way as Christians 'killed for sport by jihadists' in Nigeria,” Fox News, Published December 30, 2023, <https://www.foxnews.com/world/world-looks-other-way-christians-killed-sport-jihadists-nigeria>.

<sup>2</sup> “Christmas Massacre in Nigeria,” Release International, Published December 30, 2023, <https://releaseinternational.org/christmas-massacre-nigeria/>.

<sup>3</sup> “5,068 Citizens Massacred for Being Christians in Nigeria in 2022,” Intersociety, Accessed January 5, 2024, <https://intersociety-ng.org/5068-citizens-massacred-for-being-christians-in-nigeria-in-2022-1041-slaughtered-in-first-100-days-of-2023/>.

<sup>4</sup> “USCIRF Calls for Congressional Hearing After State Department Fails to Designate Nigeria,” USCIRF, Published January 4, 2024, <https://www.uscifr.gov/news-room/releases-statements/uscifr-calls-congressional-hearing-after-state-department-fails>.

<sup>5</sup> Sean Nelson (@Sean\_ADFIntl), “Once again, Nigeria not even mentioned on the @StateDept religious freedom violators list...,” Twitter, January 4, 2024, [https://x.com/Sean\\_ADFIntl/status/1743026089524687256](https://x.com/Sean_ADFIntl/status/1743026089524687256).

<sup>6</sup> Arielle Del Turco (@arielledelturco), “It is reprehensible that the State Department refused to name Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern...,” January 4, 2024, <https://x.com/arielledelturco/status/1743071114568339517>

<sup>7</sup> McKenna Wendt (@mckenna\_wendt), “Speechless that the plight of Christians in Nigeria has been overlooked yet again...,” January 4, 2024, [https://twitter.com/mckenna\\_wendt/status/1743033333083246593](https://twitter.com/mckenna_wendt/status/1743033333083246593).

The eyes of the world look to the United States as a beacon of hope and freedom. Religious freedom is grounded in the American founding, enshrined in the Bill of Rights, and quintessential to what it means to be an American. When the United States stands silent as evil runs amok, the world takes notice.

We request that you immediately reverse course and re-designate Nigeria as a CPC.

Respectfully,

Paul Teller  
Executive Director  
Advancing American Freedom

Frank Wolf  
Former Member  
United States Congress

Tony Perkins  
Former Chair  
U.S. Commission on  
International Religious Freedom

Kristen Waggoner  
President and CEO  
Alliance Defending Freedom  
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Ambassador Sam Brownback  
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Maureen Blum  
Executive Director  
Catholics Count

Brent Bozell  
Founder and President  
Media Research Center

Nina Shea  
Director  
Center for Religious Freedom  
Hudson Institute

Rick Santorum  
Chairman  
Patriot Voices

Andrea Picciotti-Bayer  
Director  
Conscience Project

Brian Burch  
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CatholicVote

Jane Adolphe  
Executive Director  
International Catholic Jurists Forum

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Arielle Del Turco  
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