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## **Attacks on Christians: UK MPs seek sanctions against Nigeria**

By Clifford Ndujihe

Vanguard (07.01.2021) - <https://bit.ly/3bnH3DV> - Some members of United Kingdom House of Lords have asked the UK to take more action against Nigeria to check the rising killings of Christians by terrorists and state actors in parts of the West African country.

In a letter to Dominic Raab, MP, UK's Foreign Secretary, House of Commons, London, they lamented that the attacks led by Islamist militia continue in northern states and the Middle Belt, with almost-daily reports of killings, mayhem, rape and sexual abuse, abductions and enslavement, mass forced displacement and land-grabs.

The key signatories to the letter are David Patrick Paul Alton, the Lord Alton of Liverpool, a Liberal Democratic member of UK Parliament; Caroline Annex Cox, a cross-bench member of the UK House of Lords; and Sam Mason. They are also prominent members of the UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Belief as well as key members of Jubilee Campaign International, an Int'l anti-religious persecution campaign group featuring prominent world religious and political leaders including former Nigeria President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo and past Archbishops of Canterbury UK All-Party Parliamentary Group For International Freedom of Religion or Belief.

They said: "We write following the publication of a new report by Nigerian human rights group, Intersociety (December 14, 2020), which raises serious concerns about the scale of human rights abuses in Nigeria and the need for an urgent response.

"Attacks led by Islamist militia continue in northern states and the Middle Belt, with almost-daily reports of killings, mayhem, rape and sexual abuse, abductions and enslavement, mass forced displacement and land-grabs. According to Intersociety, an estimated 34,400 Christians have been killed in Nigeria since 2009 – including 17,000 by Boko Haram (and its splinter groups) and 15,500 by Fulani militia.

"Reports consistently showed that in Nigeria, month after month, on average of hundreds of Christians were being killed for reasons connected with their faith. Those worst affected included Christian women and girls abducted, and forced to convert, enter forced marriages, sexual abuse and torture," they said.

"The same concerns were raised in two other recent reports: 'Nigeria: Unfolding Genocide?' by the APPG for International Freedom of Religion or Belief; and 'Nigeria's Silent Slaughter: Genocide in Nigeria and the Implications for the International Community,' by the International Committee on Nigeria and the International Organisation on Peace-building and Social Justice.

"The ICC's decade-long preliminary investigation (which concluded December 11, 2020) found that Nigerian security forces have committed crimes against humanity and war crimes, including: murder, rape, torture, and cruel treatment; enforced disappearance;

forcible transfer of population; outrages upon personal dignity; intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population as such and against individual civilians not taking direct part in hostilities; unlawful imprisonment; conscripting and enlisting children under the age of fifteen years into armed forces and using them to participate actively in hostilities; persecution on gender and political grounds; and other inhumane acts.

The ICC confirmed that domestic courts have not responded to atrocities adequately or at all and that the Nigerian government has failed in its obligations to hold those responsible to account. However, the Office of the Prosecutor faces serious resource constraints to investigating and prosecuting new situations and cases. We therefore urge HMG, as a State Party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, to ensure any investigation is adequately resourced."

Intersociety reports that 1,400 Christians have been killed by the Nigerian army, police and air force. Nigerian army's former Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-General Theophilus Danjuma says the armed forces are "not neutral, they collude" in the "ethnic cleansing in riverine states" by Fulani herders. He insists that villagers must defend themselves because "depending on the armed forces" will result in them dying "one by one. The ethnic cleansing must stop."

Commending the decision by the US State Department to designate Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern because of FoRB violations and its recognition of escalating "religious-tinged violence," the MPs said "the lack of comparable response by the UK is both stark and alarming. If HMG continue to ignore or downplay the strong religious factor fuelling the conflict, as identified by the US State Department, resources will be wasted on the implementation of solutions based on a premise that has little-to-no impact on the violence."

### **UK government's response**

Over £2 billion of UK bilateral aid was given to Nigeria between 2011 and 2018, an equivalent of £800,000 every day. However, we share growing concerns over how the funds are spent; and how it could be better spent – especially in relation to the protection of those most at risk of attack and the need to bring perpetrators to justice.

The UK is also one of the largest donors to the World Food Programme's emergency operation in North-east Nigeria, but it does not currently provide humanitarian assistance in the Middle Belt states, despite this being one of the worst-affected regions.

"For the UK merely to "emphasize the importance of mediation and inter-faith dialogue" trivialises the scale of persecution of Christians. It is too simplistic for the UK Government to label atrocities committed by Fulani militia as driven by desertification, climate change or competition for resources. Protracted attempts to address these (albeit important) longer-term factors will not stop the current rate of killings."

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## **Dozens of Nigerian Christians killed during Christmas**

***Islamic extremist groups have kidnapped, killed and executed Christians throughout the country. Many villages have been attacked and churches destroyed.***

Evangelical Focus (05.01.2021) – <https://bit.ly/35Gtdcb> – Islamic extremist terrorists who kidnapped 11 Christians in northeast Nigeria on Christmas Day have executed five of them, according to a video released by the Islamic State's AMAQ News agency.

The 49-second video, dated Dec. 29, shows five armed members of the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) lining up behind five men dressed in orange robes who are kneeling with their hands tied behind them.

Ordered in the Hausa language, common throughout northern Nigeria, to state their names, each of the kneeling men in turn is heard saying their name and adding, "I'm a Christian".

One of the ISWAP militants then says, "This is a warning to Christians in all parts of the world and those in Nigeria. We have not forgotten what you did to our brethren in Zangon Kataf town and other parts of Nigeria. Use the heads of these five of your brethren to continue with your ungodly celebrations". The five Christians were then shot to death.

The executioner's citing of Zangon-Kataf appears to refer to ethnic clashes in the area in Kaduna state in 1992 over a proposal to relocate a market away from land granted to the Hausa people, who are primarily Muslim.

Clashes broke out between them and the indigenous, predominantly Christian Atyap people, resulting in 60 deaths in February 1992 and 400 more in May 1992, with Hausa youths killing many Christians of various tribes in retaliation.

### ***Attack on Garkida***

On Christmas Eve, ISWAP terrorists began an attack on Garkida, Adamawa state, that local residents assumed was launched by Boko Haram, the Islamic extremist group from which ISWAP broke off in 2016.

Government and local sources said the Nigerian army repelled the attack, but as it continued into the wee hours of Christmas Day, the assailants were said to have killed six Christians and kidnapped 11 others.

Morning Star News received messages from area residents on Wednesday (Dec. 30) asserting that six Christians were killed in Friday's (Dec. 25) attack on Garkida, and that the Christians martyred in the video were among the 11 kidnapped.

Moses Abarshi, a Christian leader in northern Nigeria, notified Morning Star News that a Christian had told him that his brother and four other Christians had been executed for their faith.

"Please let us keep the family in our thoughts and prayers in this trying time. May the blood of these martyrs keep speaking for the gospel. May the church not be frightened and discouraged, in Jesus name!", Abarshi said by text message.

The attack by suspected Boko Haram militants forced Christians to halt Christmas preparations and flee into bushes to escape, area residents said.

"Garkida town in Adamawa state is under a massive attack. Please pray for us, as this isn't how we planned for Christmas, Lord", area resident said in a text message to Morning Star News.

During the attack on Garkida town, ISWAP burned down homes, looted shops and stores, set fire to a hospital and took food from homes, area Christians said.

### ***7 Christians killed in Christmas Eve***

Islamic extremist militants also killed seven Christians in Christmas Eve attacks in northeast Nigeria's Borno state, according to area residents.

Residents of the villages of Pemi and Debro, near Chibok, Borno state said the insurgents were members of Islamic extremist group Boko Haram. The jihadists began their attacks on predominantly Christian Pemi and Debro at about 6 p.m., area residents said.

"Seven Christians were killed at Pemi, and the church building of EYN was completely burned by them. Houses, cars and stores were burned down. The Boko Haram gunmen carried out the attacks for three hours before soldiers arrived at the area at 9 p.m.", an area resident told Morning Star News.

### ***Terror in Kaduna region***

In north-central Nigeria, a series of attacks by Muslim Fulani herdsmen across three counties of southern Kaduna state earlier this month killed 33 Christians, destroyed 18 homes and displaced more than 2,500 people, Christian leaders told Morning Star News.

On December 17 in Zangon-Kataf County, the herdsmen killed at least 10 Christians in Goran Gan village and destroyed 18 homes, and on December 21 they killed three others at Ungwan Jatau and Ungwan Gimba villages, area residents told Morning Star News in text messages.

"On Dec. 17, the Gora Gan community was attacked by armed gunmen suspected to be Fulani militias on motorcycles", Sule Tinat Bodam, general secretary of the Atyap Community Development Association and a Christian community leader in Zangon-Kataf, said

Furthermore, in Chikun County, herdsmen on Tuesday (December 22) killed seven Christians and wounded four in Gbaja village and killed two more Christians in Ungwan Gwaiva, while in Kajuru County, herdsmen killed three Christians in Kujeni village on Tuesday (December 22), sources said.

"Kidnapping has become the order of the day as these kidnappers get into people's houses and abduct them without any resistance or challenge from the security agents", Rev. Ali Buba Lamido, archbishop of Kaduna Province of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), pointed out in a statement.

According to Lamido, "many people have been abducted, and a lot of millions of naira were paid as ransom. Those kidnapped were subjected to dehumanizing conditions and traumatizing experiences. Some family members of the those kidnapped were shot while trying to escape from the kidnappers".

The U.S. State Department on December 7 added Nigeria to its list of Countries of Particular Concern for engaging in or tolerating "systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom." Nigeria joined Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan on the list.

Nigeria ranked 12th on Open Doors' 2020 World Watch List of countries where Christians suffer the most persecution but second in the number of Christians killed for their faith, behind Pakistan.