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## **Pastor, wife and three other Christians slain in Nigeria**

[Christian Daily](#) (12.06.2024) - Suspected Fulani herdsmen killed a pastor, his wife and three other Christians at about midnight on June 2 in Plateau state, central Nigeria, sources said.

The raiders with heavy weaponry attacked a predominantly Christian village in Kwall District, Bassa County, killing Pastor Dauda Dalyop, 63, of the Assemblies of God Church; his wife Chummy Dauda, 57; Chwe Ajuhs, 26; Joshua Kusa, 45; and Rikwe Doro, 43, said Sam Jugo, spokesman for the Irigwe Development Association, an umbrella group of the predominantly Christian ethnic group in Plateau state.

"In the middle of the night of June 2, Fulani herdsmen invaders attacked and killed five of our residents in cold blood at Ari Songo hamlet in Kimakpa area of Kwall District," Jugo said in a press statement. "Two other Christians were severely injured and are currently undergoing treatment at a hospital in Jos."

In his original statement to Nigerian media, Jugo identified the assailants only as "criminal invaders." Questioned by Christian Daily International-Morning Star News, he revised his statement to identify them as "Fulani herdsmen invaders."

Two days prior, a band of herdsmen ambushed and attacked two Christians in the same Kwall area, he said.

"This sad incident is coming just two days after some herdsmen ambushed two other Christians, killing one of them, Mr. Irmiya Musa Timbi, while the second victim was injured," Jugo said.

The Rev. Ronku Aka, a pastor in the area, confirmed the attack in a message to Morning Star News. Fidelis Adara, a Bassa council official, corroborated the information.

The Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) called on the Nigerian government to investigate continued killings and bring them to an end. The Rev. Akus Odoh of ECWA, Miango District Church Council, condemned the most recent attack in strong terms called for a thorough investigation.

"Nigeria has lost its values, and the government doesn't respect the right to life," Odoh said.

Alfred Alabo, spokesman for the Plateau State Police Command, confirmed that five persons were killed, including the pastor.

"The commissioner of police went there and saw the scene of the incident, and he has posted men to that place to ensure that it doesn't happen again," Alabo said. "We are working with the community to get more information concerning the incident."

Nigeria remained the deadliest place in the world to follow Christ, with 4,118 people killed for their faith from Oct. 1, 2022 to Sept. 30, 2023, according to Open Doors' 2024 World Watch List (WWL) report. More kidnappings of Christians than in any other country also took place in Nigeria, with 3,300.

Nigeria was also the third highest country in number of attacks on churches and other Christian buildings such as hospitals, schools, and cemeteries, with 750, according to the report.

In the 2024 WWL of the countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian, Nigeria was ranked No. 6, as it was in the previous year.

Numbering in the millions across Nigeria and the Sahel, predominantly Muslim Fulani comprise hundreds of clans of many different lineages who do not hold extremist views, but some Fulani do adhere to radical Islamist ideology, the United Kingdom's All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom or Belief (APPG) noted in a 2020 [report](#).

"They adopt a comparable strategy to Boko Haram and ISWAP and demonstrate a clear intent to target Christians and potent symbols of Christian identity," the APPG report states.

Christian leaders in Nigeria have said they believe herdsmen attacks on Christian communities in Nigeria's Middle Belt are inspired by their desire to forcefully take over Christians' lands and impose Islam as desertification has made it difficult for them to sustain their herds.

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## **UN experts demand release of Yahaya Sharif-Aminu imprisoned for WhatsApp messages**

***Sharif-Aminu was sentenced to death by hanging for sharing allegedly "blasphemous" song lyrics on WhatsApp***

[ADF International](#) (17.05.2024) - Experts from the United Nations have called for the immediate and unconditional release of Yahaya-Sharif Aminu. Sharif-Aminu was sentenced to death by hanging in 2020 for sharing allegedly "blasphemous" song lyrics on WhatsApp about the prophet Mohammed.

Sharif-Aminu's case, pending before the Supreme Court of Nigeria, challenges the Sharia-based blasphemy law of Kano State, Nigeria.

Sharif-Aminu remains in prison awaiting his appeal to the Supreme Court, which was [filed](#) with the support of ADF International in November 2022.

In addition to calling for Sharif-Aminu's immediate release, the [UN experts](#) expressed their concern that, *"Mr. Sharif-Aminu has been in prison for too long for exercising his human rights,"* and they urge the Supreme Court of Nigeria to *"consider Mr. Sharif-Aminu's case as a priority, and to urgently adopt a decision taking into consideration Nigeria's obligations under international human rights law"*. The experts called on the government to promptly review Sharif-Aminu's case, guarantee the protection of his human rights, and ensure his well-being.

*"We are grateful to advocates of religious freedom, freedom of expression, and other important human rights across the globe, including at the United Nations, who are speaking out on Yahaya's behalf,"* said Sean Nelson, legal counsel for ADF International. *"While the international community demands action, Yahaya continues to languish in prison awaiting a hearing at the Supreme Court of Nigeria."*

Nelson continued, stating: *"Now is the time for Nigerian officials to heed the urgings of world leaders, immediately release Yahaya Sharif-Aminu, and get rid of these egregious blasphemy laws that violate the basic human rights of their citizens. No person should be punished, prosecuted, or threatened with death for their peaceful expression and their faith. The time to act is now."*

*"As long as religious minorities are imprisoned for mere peaceful expression, religious freedom is imperiled in Nigeria,"* stated Kola Alapinni, international human rights lawyer and legal counsel for Yahaya Sharif-Aminu in partnership with ADF International. *"I am thankful to the UN experts for speaking out on Yahaya's behalf, and I implore all who are able to keep up the global pressure for advancing our human rights in Nigeria. It is my hope that in a positive step forward, the Supreme Court will hear Yahaya's case and eliminate these oppressive blasphemy laws that hinder our rights to speak and live freely."* More information about Yahaya Sharif-Aminu's case is available [here](#).

### **Religious persecution in Nigeria**

The persecution of minority religion adherents, including Christians and minority Muslims, in Nigeria is especially severe. More Christians are killed for their faith in Nigeria than any other country on earth. Recent reports show over [7,000 Christians](#) were killed for their faith last year, with at least [200 Christians](#) murdered by militants in Plateau State, Nigeria, this past Christmas.

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom recently [recommended](#) that Nigeria be placed on the US's CPC list, highlighting Yahaya Sharif-Aminu's blasphemy case.

Earlier this year, members of the US Congress [voted](#) to move forward with a resolution calling for greater US action in response to the religious freedom crisis in Nigeria. The House resolution, which can be read in full [here](#), calls on the US Secretary of State to designate Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) on their list of worst [religious freedom](#) offenders for *"engaging in and tolerating systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom,"* while also highlighting religious prisoners of conscience and the egregious blasphemy laws in Nigeria.

Earlier this year, both members of the [US House of Representatives](#) and [US Senate](#) moved forward with resolutions that condemn the prevalent violations of religious freedom in Nigeria, and call for greater intervention from the US government, including to *"leverage all diplomatic and sanctions tools available to the United States Government to hold religious freedom violators accountable for their actions"*.

Members of the [UK Parliament](#) also condemned Sharif-Aminu's sentence and imprisonment, stating "The UK Government opposes the death penalty in all circumstances. We will continue to raise Mr. Sharif-Aminu's case as he appeals his sentence." The Parliament went on to convey their support for Sharif-Aminu, and their support for freedom of religion and belief for all in Nigeria.

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## Resolution on attacks against Christians in Nigeria

[COMECE](#) (09.02.2024) - COMECE welcomes the [resolution](#) of the European Parliament adopted on Thursday, 8 February 2024, condemning recent attacks against Christians in Nigeria COMECE: *"The resolution, however, downplays the religious dimension of the conflict"*.

The [Resolution adopted](#) by the European Parliament condemns the massacre committed on 23-25 December 2023, when gunmen launched a large-scale attack in more than 160 villages in the Bokkos, Barkin Ladi, and Magu authority areas of Plateau State, causing the deaths of at least 200 Christians.

In the adopted text, MEPs acknowledge *"the role of climate change, competition for scarce resources, and the disappearance of effective mediation schemes"*. Despite these contextual drivers of the conflict, there is a religious dimension, [as highlighted](#) by Cardinal John Olorunfemi Onaiyekan, which was downplayed in the EP resolution.

Moreover, according to a [statement](#) of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, *"the continued havoc caused by armed herdsmen in various parts of our country, can no longer be treated as mere clash between pastoralists and farmers. Their activities [should be] treated as acts of terrorism"*.

Commenting on the recent vote at the European Parliament, Fr. Manuel Barrios Prieto, General Secretary of COMECE, states that *"environmental and economic pressures cannot sufficiently explain the ferocity of the attacks and their coordinated and systematic patterns committed by Fulani Islamist terrorists"*.

The 2023 Christmas Eve attacks mentioned in the EP Resolution are not isolated cases. In a January 2024 attack, [Fulani infiltrated terrorists](#) killed more than 30 persons, and destroyed several houses and worship centres.

Last September, seminarian Na'Aman Danlami Stephen from the Diocese of Kafanchan was burned to death in a heinous terror attack. In addition, over 2 million Christians in Benue State have been internally displaced due to violence.

The perpetrators of these crimes, Islamist extremists, including jihadists, enjoy impunity, as they are rarely prosecuted and condemned.

Already in 2020, the European Parliament [denounced](#) that *"over 6,000 Christians have been murdered since 2015 by jihadist groups or have perished as a result of the 'your land or your blood' policy carried out by Fulani militants"*.

COMECE expresses its grave concern over the persecution faced by Christian communities in Nigeria and recalls the EU institutions to give a more decisive and robust response to Islamist terrorism in Nigeria. *"It should no longer be tolerated that all these crimes remain unaccountable. The Nigerian government has a responsibility to protect its citizens, including systematically persecuted Christian communities"*, states COMECE General Secretary Fr. Manuel Barrios Prieto.

COMECE urgently calls upon the European Union to take robust measures in line with its legislation and employ diplomatic channels to ensure the protection of all citizens in Nigeria. In this context, the EU Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief and the EU Special Representative for Human Rights could also give a valuable contribution.

Already [in May 2020](#), COMECE called on the international community to stop the growing persecution of Christians in Nigeria. In [May 2023](#), COMECE received H.E. Mgr. Matthew Hassan Kukah, Bishop of Sokoto, and facilitated a dialogue meeting with representatives from the EU and its Member States.