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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by European Centre for Law and Justice, The / Centre Européen pour le droit, les Justice et les droits de l'homme, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[26 May 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

REQUESTING THAT THE U.N. TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION TO PROVIDE AID AND PROTECTION TO INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS WHO ARE SUFFERING IN NIGERIA

1. INTRODUCTION

Since 2009, more than 52,250 Christians have been killed, more than 700 Christians have been abducted, and more than 18,000 churches and 2,200 Christian schools burned down in Nigeria by Islamic militants.(1) This violence has forced five million Christians from their homes to refugee camps.(2) Rather than violence subsiding, reports show that Nigeria accounted for 90% of all Christians who were killed because of their faith in 2022.(3) This represents a 10% increase from the previous year.(4) Furthermore, during just the first three months of 2023, reports indicate that more than 1,000 Christians have been killed in Nigeria.(5) This level of violence has resulted in a massive humanitarian crisis that has created 2,375,846 internally displaced persons (IDPs) as of February 2023.(6)

2. BACKGROUND

Nigeria is ranked as the sixth most dangerous country for Christians to live, due to violence by groups like Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen.(7) More than nine thousand Christians have been killed over the past two years in Nigeria.(8) And, as stated above, as of March 31, 2023, more than one thousand Christians have already been killed since the beginning of the year.(9)

Although attacks were previously concentrated in the northern region of Nigeria, with Boko Haram generally considered responsible, violence now primarily occurs in the central region.(10) Fulani militias are considered responsible for the majority of these killings in the central region.(11) These attacks throughout the country have put millions of innocent people in jeopardy, and it is estimated that 8.3 million people in Nigeria are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance.(12)

3. VIOLATIONS

Below, we have highlighted a fraction of the attacks that are being carried out daily that are forcing people to leave their homes and become displaced.

On May 16, 2023, at least twenty people, mostly women and children, were killed as armed attackers opened fire and burned houses in Kubat Village in central Nigeria.(13) Attackers ambushed the village in the early morning and began shooting, even killing some villagers as they tried to escape.(14) Because the Plateau State of central Nigeria is known for violent conflicts due to religious differences between Muslim Fulani herdsman and Christian villagers, Fulani herdsmen are suspected to be responsible for the attack.(15)

On May 5, 2023, forty people were abducted from a Baptist church in Nigeria during a Sunday worship service.(16) Although fifteen people were able to escape, the remaining people were held by the abductors.(17) The abductors are likely part of local, heavily-armed gangs, known in the region as bandits, who frequently conduct mass abductions and hold the people for ransom.(18) In addition to the threat of groups like Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen, criminal gangs are a threat to Nigerian Christians as well.(19)

Over an eleven-day period in late April 2023, Fulani herdsmen killed eighteen people in predominately Christian villages in Plateau State.(20) In one attack, Rev. Gwong Dachollom was shot and cut with a machete.(21) Thankfully, he received medical attention for life-threatening injuries.(22) In another attack, Fulani militants shot and killed a Christian who was attending the burial of six Christians killed in a separate attack on April 25, 2023.(23)

During a series of attacks that lasted from April 16 to April 19, 2023, Fulani herdsmen killed twelve people in predominately Christian villages in central Nigeria.(24) During one attack, Fulani herdsmen burned down the house of a pastor, as well as dozens of other homes that belonged to Christians.(25) One resident described the bloodshed in these words: “The victims were murdered like animals, while some inhabitants of these communities are still missing Valuables worth millions of naira have been lost. More than 50 houses have been burnt down to ashes, and food and cash crops were burnt to ashes, too.”(26)

On April 15, 2023, Islamic extremists attacked the Runji Village in Zangon Kataf Local Government Area (LGA) of the Kaduna State.(27) Thirty-three people were killed, including fourteen children.(28) One of the victims was a five-year-old boy who was beheaded, and other victims were burned beyond recognition.(29) The victims were reportedly buried in a mass grave.(30) One man who was interviewed about the attack reported that forty houses were burned and that he had no doubt that the attackers were Fulani herdsmen.(31)

During Holy Week of April 2023, at least ninety-four Christians were killed in a series of attacks in north-central Nigeria.(32) The attacks lasted from April 2 to April 7 as Muslim militias targeted Christian worshippers.(33) In one of the attacks, armed men attacked a Pentecostal church during a Palm Sunday service, killed a young boy, and kidnapped the pastor and other worshippers.(34) Just three days later, fifty people in a predominately Catholic village were killed by armed attackers.(35) On Good Friday, Muslim extremists attacked an elementary school that was sheltering more than 100 displaced Christians, the extremists killed forty-three people and injured another forty.(36)

That same week, on April 5, 2023, Fulani herdsmen are suspected to have killed at least forty-six villagers who were attending a funeral in Umogidi Village in Benue State of central northern Nigeria.(37) The villagers were mourning the death of three other people who had been killed just one day earlier.(38) Many villagers were unaccounted for, so the death toll may be even higher.(39)

During March 2023, several attacks resulted in the death of twenty-nine Christians in the northern Kaduna State of Nigeria.(40) On March 23, 2023, Musa Mairimi, the pastor of the Evangelical Church, Winning All, was killed while at his home.(41) His wife was also abducted during the attack.(42) In attacks on two separate villages, which took place on March 10 and March 14, 2023, a total of twenty-seven Christians were killed.(43) In another attack on March 10, 2023, attackers raided a Baptist pastor’s home, killed the pastor and his son, and then abducted four of the family members.(44) A few hours later, the pastor’s wife was released.(45) For the release of the remaining family members, the attackers demanded a ransom of five million naira.(46)

4. REQUEST

As demonstrated above, Nigeria continues to fail to protect Christians from mass atrocities which is resulting in a massive humanitarian crisis. Every day there are more reports of violent attacks being carried out which are forcing people from their homes. It is of utmost importance that the Human Rights Council urge Nigeria to take immediate steps to provide aid and protection for IDPs so that they can safely return home.

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