

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

The Honorable Marco A. Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We write to urge you to consider designating Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) pursuant to the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA)¹ to give the President additional authority to take specific actions to address the continued unchecked acts of violence and terrorism against religious minorities perpetrated by nonstate actors in Nigeria.

As you know, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo designated Nigeria as a CPC in December 2020², for the ongoing and egregious violations of religious freedom perpetrated within its borders, particularly by nonstate actors such as Boko Haram and other terrorist groups³.

While Secretary of State Antony Blinken removed Nigeria from the CPC list in 2021, on March 25, 2025, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) recommended that Nigeria be placed once again on the CPC list, citing several incidents of violence and terrorism against religious minorities:

In May 2024, al-Qaeda-affiliated Ansaru gunmen reportedly kidnapped 160 mainly Christian children and killed eight people in Niger State but later released the abducted children....in Niger State, suspected bandits killed 10 farmers, including Christians, and in August, bandits reportedly killed 70 Christians and kidnapped 20 students in separate attacks in Benue State⁴

Most recently, in late June 2025, reports suggest that at least 200 Christians in Nigeria were brutally killed by terrorists in Benue state⁵. This same report suggests that Nigeria is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be Christian, citing 3,100 of the 4,476 Christians killed during their reporting period lived in Nigeria.

As you know, on May 1, 2025, President Trump issued an executive order to establish the Religious Liberty Commission with the intent for this commission to vigorously enforce the historic and robust protections for religious liberty enshrined in Federal law and to work with the White House Faith Office to partner with the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom to further the cause of religious liberty around the world⁶.

¹ 22 U.S.C. § 6442

² Laura Kelly, *Nigeria joins State Dept list of violators of religious freedom*, THE HILL (December 7, 2020), <https://thehill.com/policy/international/529121-nigeria-joins-state-dept-list-of-violators-of-religious-freedom/>.

³ United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, *2025 Annual Report* (March 2025), <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/2025%20USCIRF%20Annual%20Report.pdf>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Paul Tilsley, *Pope, State Department Condemn Latest Massacre of Christians by Islamist Militants in Nigeria*, FOX NEWS (July 1, 2025), <https://www.foxnews.com/world/pope-state-department-condemn-latest-massacre-christians-islamist-militants-nigeria>

⁶ Exec. Order No. 14291, *Establishment of the Religious Liberty Commission* (May 1, 2025), 90 Fed. Reg. 19417 (May 7, 2025).

On September 23, 2019, President Trump issued a global call to condemn religious persecution and defend the freedom of all believers stating that:

“Today with one clear voice, the United States of America calls upon the nations of the world to end religious persecution. To stop crimes against people of faith, release prisoners of conscience, repeal laws restricting freedom of religion and belief...America stands with believers in every country who ask only for the freedom to live according to the faith that is within their own hearts⁷.”

We are grateful for President Trump and your work to champion our founding freedoms at home, as well as to condemn religious persecution around the world. We hope you will carefully consider designating Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) pursuant to the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A blue ink signature of Ted Budd, written in a cursive style.

Ted Budd
United States Senator

A blue ink signature of Pete Ricketts, written in a cursive style.

Pete Ricketts
United States Senator

A blue ink signature of Josh Hawley, written in a cursive style.

Josh Hawley
United States Senator

A blue ink signature of Ted Cruz, written in a cursive style.

Ted Cruz
United States Senator

A blue ink signature of James Lankford, written in a cursive style.

James Lankford
United States Senator

⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Global Call to Protect Religious Freedom* (September 23, 2019), <https://2017-2021.state.gov/a-global-call-to-protect-religious-freedom/>.