

PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENT

From Nigerian American Christians on the CPC Designation of Nigeria and Mass Atrocities
Against Christians

Good afternoon.

My name is *Pastor Olumide Ogunjuyigbe*, and I speak on behalf of *Pastor James Fadel in his capacity as President of CANAN – Christian Association of Nigerian – Americans*, a network of Nigerian American Christians across the U.S. deeply connected to the people and churches of Nigeria which has existed for over a dozen years

We are here today because the United States government, under President Donald Trump, has once again designated Nigeria as a “Country of Particular Concern” under the International Religious Freedom Act, due to severe violations of religious freedom and the ongoing persecution of Christians.

We welcome this designation. It is overdue, and it is necessary. But let us be clear: a label is not a solution. A Country of Particular Concern designation only matters if it is followed by consistent, concrete action to stop the killing, end impunity, and protect vulnerable communities.

For years, we have watched in horror as our families, friends, and churches in Nigeria have been targeted and slaughtered by Islamist extremists—Boko Haram, ISWAP, Islamic State-linked groups, and jihadist Fulani militias—as well as by criminal bandits who operate with near-total impunity.

Since 2009, it is estimated that more than 50,000 Christians have been killed in Nigeria in religiously tinged violence. In the last few years alone, thousands more have been murdered and kidnapped; many of them are pastors, catechists, worshippers, women, and children whose only “crime” was bearing the name of Christ or living in Christian-majority communities.

Entire villages have been burned. Churches and Christian schools have been bombed or razed. Clergy have been beheaded. Christian girls have been abducted, forcibly converted, and married off. This week, Brigadier General Uba, a Nigerian Army Brigade Commander was executed by Islamist terrorists and the killing posted on social media by his killers. This is not random crime. It is genocide.

We use the word genocide carefully, intentionally and deliberately.

When Christian communities are systematically attacked, displaced, and destroyed because of their faith; when the murder, abduction, and terrorizing of Christians reaches this scale and continues year after year while authorities fail to stop it; when perpetrators openly declare their intention to wipe out Christian presence in certain regions—this is what we, as Nigerian American Christians, recognize as genocidal violence.

We know there is debate over terminology. International bodies and foreign governments point out—correctly—that Muslims and others are also victims of extremist violence in Nigeria. Many Muslims have been killed by Boko Haram and other armed groups, especially in the northeast of Nigeria.

We grieve all Nigerian lives lost. We reject any narrative that denies the suffering of our Muslim neighbors.

But acknowledging that Muslims also suffer does not erase the plain fact that Christian communities, especially in central and northern Nigeria, have been systematically singled out and devastated over many years. Calling that reality by its proper name does not inflame hatred; it forces us to face the scale of the crisis honestly.

To the government of Nigeria, we speak as people with a God-endorsed stake in Nigeria:

Stop treating this as a public relations problem and face it as a national emergency.

Stop denying the obvious religious dimension of the violence.

We echo the call of Pastor Enoch Adeboye, the General Overseer of RCCG Worldwide that Military Chiefs should be given 90 days to eliminate the terrorists and their financiers, or resign. End the culture of impunity that tells extremists they can kill Christians—and others—without consequence.

We are not asking you to choose Christians over Muslims. We are asking you to protect all Nigerians equally, without fear or favor, as your constitution demands.

To the government of the United States, we say this:

You cannot, in good faith, call Nigeria a Country of Particular Concern and then do nothing meaningful with that designation. The International Religious Freedom Act exists for a reason. It is supposed to trigger real leverage—diplomatic, economic, and legal—when governments engage in or tolerate systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom.

So we call for:

1. **Targeted sanctions**—visa bans and asset freezes—on military, political, traditional and local leaders who are credibly implicated in enabling, ordering, or turning a blind eye to mass atrocities and religiously targeted violence.
2. **Conditioned security assistance.** U.S. security cooperation and military aid to Nigeria must be tied to measurable progress: reductions in attacks, credible prosecutions of perpetrators, and demonstrated steps to dismantle extremist networks and protect vulnerable communities.
3. **An independent, international inquiry**—under the United Nations or a credible multilateral body—to investigate mass atrocities in Nigeria, including whether genocidal acts have been committed against Christians and other groups.

4. **Robust support for victims and survivors:**
 - Humanitarian aid for displaced communities;
 - Trauma care for survivors of attacks and abductions;
 - Support for rebuilding destroyed churches, schools, and communities, in partnership with trusted local actors.
5. **Early-warning and prevention mechanisms** so that escalating patterns of violence are detected and addressed before the next massacre, not after. Similar proposals are contained in House Resolution 860 introduced by Congressman Chris Smith of New Jersey and we hereby endorse same. In addition we ask for
6. Increase of the number of Refugees into America and include the persecuted like Christians from Gwoza who have been refugees in Cameroun for over a decade now. Jihadists destruction left only 28 out of 176 churches and their land is still occupied till date.
7. Provide Temporary Protective Status for Nigerians in the U.S.

At the same time, we must be equally clear about what we do not want.

We do not want performative outrage in Washington while nothing changes in Benue, Plateau, Kaduna, Borno, or the villages whose names rarely reach our television screens here in the United States.

We do not want partisan point-scoring in the United States, where Nigerian blood becomes a talking point for whichever side is in power. Nigerian lives are not props in anyone's culture war.

We also do not want open-ended talk of U.S. military intervention that ignores the complexity on the ground and risks making an already volatile situation even worse. Any external military action, especially if framed as "protecting Christians," could inflame sectarian tensions, strengthen extremist recruitment, and undermine the very communities we are trying to defend if not done in concert with and consent of Nigeria

What we are asking for is something harder than slogans: serious, sustained, principled pressure on the Nigerian state and serious, sustained support for those risking their lives to build peace and defend human dignity on the ground.

To our fellow Christians around the world, especially in the United States:

Do not look away.

You cannot claim to care about religious freedom and remain silent while one of the deadliest environments for Christians in the world continues to bleed. You cannot speak loudly about persecution when it fits your political narrative and then go quiet when the facts are messy and don't break neatly along partisan lines.

We ask you to:

- Pray—consistently, not just when a shocking video goes viral.
- Speak—raise this in your churches, denominations, and organizations.
- Advocate—press your elected officials to match words with action.
- Support—partner with credible Nigerian churches, NGOs, and human rights groups who are doing the day-to-day work of protecting the vulnerable.

We stand here today as Nigerian American Christians—fully Nigerian, fully American, fully Christian. We refuse to choose between those identities. We will use the privilege of our American voice to speak for our Nigerian families who have been silenced by fear, poverty, or death.

The CPC designation is a start, not a finish line.

If it leads to concrete steps that save lives, strengthen justice, and protect both Christians and Muslims from terror, then it will be a tool for good. If it becomes just another sound bite that changes nothing on the ground, then it will be a moral failure and a betrayal of the people whose suffering supposedly prompted it.

We are tired of counting our dead. We are tired of mass graves and burned sanctuaries. We are tired of condolence statements that cost nothing and change nothing. CANAN conducted a relief mission to victims in Nigeria a dozen years ago but more Christians have been killed this month alone than the number of survivors we helped 12 years ago.

We are asking for courage, honesty, and action.

God bless you, God bless Nigeria and bless the United States.

Thank you.