

June 4, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson and Minority Leader Jeffries;

As international religious freedom advocates, we stand in support of House Resolution 82 (H.Res.82) which expresses the sense of Congress that Nigeria should be designated a Country of Particular Concern (CPC). We call on you to bring H.Res.82 to the floor for a vote as soon as possible.

Nigeria is continuously rocked by terrorism at the hands of non-state actors and the targeted persecution of religious groups. In 2023, an average of 13 Christians were killed every day, making Nigeria one of the deadliest countries to practice a faith.¹ Pursuant to the International Religious Freedom Act, we believe that Nigeria meets the statutory definition of “engaging in or tolerating particularly severe violations of religious freedom” to be designated as a CPC.²

Despite the recommendation of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), the State Department removed Nigeria’s CPC designation in 2021. USCIRF has recommended Nigeria for CPC status since 2009.

Extremist violence persecutes Nigeria’s minority religious communities, especially Christians, daily. The International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law, a Nigeria-based research group, estimates that more than 50,000 Christians have been killed since 2009. The same report also estimates that approximately 18,000 churches and 2,500 Christian schools have been attacked.³ In addition, twelve of Nigeria’s northern states maintain the death penalty as a punishment for blasphemy, and the forced marriage and conversion of women and girls is a pervasive issue.⁴

The United States must actively address these issues and ensure that the principles of religious freedom are upheld globally.

The passage of H.Res.82 would send a resounding message from Congress that the State Department should rightfully designate Nigeria as a CPC. It would also reaffirm America’s

¹ “World Watch List 2024: Nigeria,” *Open Doors*, January 17, 2024, https://www.opendoors.org/persecution/reports/Nigeria-Media_Advocacy_Dossier-ODI-2024.pdf.

² 22 U.S.C. § 6402 (1998)

³ Emeka Umeagbalasi, “International Report of Nigeria’s Intersociety,” *Intersociety*, April 10, 2023, <https://intersociety-ng.org/5068-citizens-massacred-for-being-christians-in-nigeria-in-2022-1041-slaughtered-in-first-100-days-of-2023/>.

⁴ Al Chukwuma Okoli, “Gender and Terror: Boko Haram and the Abuse of Women in Nigeria,” *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, April 5, 2022, <https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2022/04/05/gender-and-terror-boko-haram-and-the-abuse-of-women-in-nigeria%E2%80%9C/>.

commitment to defending freedom of religion of belief across the world and global leadership on the world stage.

We appreciate your attention to this issue and trust that you will take decisive action.

Sincerely,

Organizations

Advocates for Faith and Justice in Vietnam
American Muslim and Multifaith Women's Empowerment Council
Ananias International
Anglican Persecuted Church Network
Armenian National Committee of America
Boat People SOS (BPSOS)
Christian Freedom International
Christian Solidarity International
Church of Scientology National Affairs Office
Congoese Integration Network Inc
Coptic Solidarity
Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention
Faith & Freedom Coalition
FICONA
Foundation for Religious Freedom
Friends of Thien Am Zen Monastery
Genocide Watch
Gerard Noodt Foundation
Global Anglican Conference (GAFCON) Suffering Church Network
Global Christian Relief
Global Peace Foundation
In Defense of Christians
International Christian Concern
International Committee on Nigeria
Jubilee Campaign
Katartismos Global
Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice
Law and Liberty Trust
LEAH Foundation
Life, Culture and Society
New Wineskins Missionary Network (Anglican)
Orthodox Public Affairs Committee
Save Armenia
Save the Persecuted Christians
Set My People Free
The Shai Fund
Vietnamese American Community of the USA

Individuals

Andrew Veniopoulos
Vice Chairman and Co-Founder
Orthodox Public Affairs Committee

Bryan Nerren
President
Asian Children's Educational Fellowship

Charmaine Hedding
President
The Shai Fund

Dede Laugesen
Executive Director
Save the Persecuted Christians

Faith J. H. McDonnell
Director of Advocacy
Katartismos Global

Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress 1981-2015, retired

Gia Quoc Nguyen
Independent Journalists Association of
Vietnam

George Gigicos
Chairman and Co-Founder
Orthodox Public Affairs Committee

Dr. Gloria Samdi Puldu
President
LEAH Foundation

Dr. Gregory Stanton
Founding President and Chairman
Genocide Watch

Hamid Gharagozloo
Chair, Iran Working Group
IRF Roundtable

Jeff King
President
International Christian Concern

Jenny Noyes
Executive Director
New Wineskins Missionary Network

Jessica Eturralde
Journalist and Communications Director
Love Your Neighbor Community

Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett
President
Lantos Foundation for Human Rights &
Justice

Kaylee Fisher
Global Operations Director
IRF Secretariat

Kelly M. Kullberg
General Secretary
American Association of Evangelicals
(AAE)

Kola Alapinni
General Counsel and Director of Operations
Foundation for Religious Freedom

Kyle Abts
Executive Director
International Committee on Nigeria

Lauren B. Homer
President
Law and Liberty Trust

Liem Ly
Advocates for Faith and Justice in Vietnam

Loan Nguyen
Member
Advocates for Faith and Justice in Vietnam

Rev. Dr. Marian Edmonds-Allen
Parity

Massimo Introvigne
Editor-in-Chief
Bitter Winter Magazine

Minh Le
Ret French Didactician

Minh L. Nguyen
Coordinator
Buddhist Solidarity Association

Nadine Maenza
President
IRF Secretariat

Dr. Nguyen Dinh Thang
PhD, recipient of 2011 Asia Human Rights
& Democracy Award
Boat People SOS

Nina Shea
Director
Hudson Institute Center for Religious
Freedom

Patricia Streeter
Co-Leader
Anglican Persecuted Church Network

Dr. Patrick D. Purtill
Director
Faith & Freedom Coalition

Dr. Paul Murray
International Vice President, Religious
Freedom Initiatives
Global Peace Foundation

Paul Teller
Executive Director
Advancing American Freedom

Peter Burns
Executive Director
IRF Summit

Rushan Abbas
Founder and Executive Director
Campaign for Uyghurs

Scott Morgan
Co-Chair
Africa Working Group

Tanya Nguyen-Do
Friends of Thien Am Zen Monastery

Tien Nguyen
Principal
Decency and Clarity

Tuan Q. Nguyen
Community Engagement Coordinator
BPSOS

William Duggan
Founder and President
Ananias International