

House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa
**“President Trump’s Redesignation of Nigeria as a “Country of
Particular Concern—CPC”: a serious, well-founded wake-up call**
Hearing Remarks by Chairman Chris Smith (R-NJ)
November 20, 2025

Welcome to this critical hearing on the systematic and accelerating violence against predominantly Christian communities in Nigeria.

This is my [12th hearing focused exclusively on Nigeria](#)—with scores of other hearings on human trafficking, religious freedom, food security and human rights focused in part on Nigeria.

I’ve led three human rights trips to Nigeria.

I want to thank our distinguished witnesses for being here today to bring light and scrutiny to this unfolding religious freedom catastrophe and ways to mitigate and end the violence and hate.

Nigeria is ground zero, the focal point of the most brutal and murderous anti-Christian persecution in the world today. Moderate Muslims who speak out against the radical Islamists or refuse to conform with the serial killers are murdered as well.

I applaud President Trump’s recent decisive action to redesignate Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) for engaging in and tolerating severe violations of religious freedom.

One of our distinguished witnesses today, Bishop Wilfred Anagbe of the Diocese of Makurdi, testified in March before this subcommittee: “Militant Fulani herdsman are terrorists. They steal and vandalize, they kill and boast about it, they kidnap and rape, and they enjoy total impunity from the elected officials. None of them have been arrested and brought to justice.”

Today, Bishop Anagbe will say: “on 13th March 2025, when I last appeared before this committee, I warned that the situation was dire and demanded urgent attention. Tragically, the past half-year has proven those warnings understated the

continued attacks on vulnerable Christian villages by the Fulani ethnic militia and their counterparts, both in the Middle Belt of Nigeria and elsewhere in the country. In my own diocese of Makurdi, you are all familiar with the massacres of Saturday 13th June in Yelwata, where 278 persons, men, women and children were killed in a manner too gory to describe here by people shouting “Allahu akbar” while slaughtering their victims. It took the prayer of the Holy Father, the Pope, on Sunday 14th June, for the Government in Nigeria to even acknowledge this evil. Even so, the federal government still seeks to downplay the numbers and has yet to properly care for the survivors, even as I speak...Abductions of clergy and laity remain rampant; priests and pastors are prime targets for elimination...”

In 2015, our former House colleague and Green Berets officer and now U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Mike Waltz, was deployed to Nigeria as part of a U.S. Special Forces unit to provide training and security assistance to Nigerian Navy SEALs in their fight against Boko Haram.

During his time there, more than 300 girls were reported missing because of Bolko Haram’s extremist violence. Working alongside his team, Ambassador Waltz supported Nigerian SEAL operations that ultimately helped rescue many of these girls from the oppressive conditions imposed under Sharia law.

This past Tuesday, Ambassador Waltz said at a special seminar on Nigeria that the situation in Nigeria now has only grown more dire. Ambassador Waltz said, “churches burn; mothers bury their children for the ‘crime’ of singing *Amazing Grace*, pastors are beheaded for preaching the Sermon on the Mount, and entire villages awaken to gunfire simply for calling Jesus their Lord. This is not random violence, it is deliberate persecution, as northern militant groups enforce sharia law and unleash targeted attacks on Christian communities. Yesterday alone,” he said, “25 girls went missing...and vanish into the dark underbelly of extremism and sex slavery.”

Make no mistake, these ongoing attacks are based on religion, and diverting attention from it denies what we have seen with our own eyes.

Thirteen years ago—in 2012—I chaired a [hearing](#) focusing on the slaughter of Christians by Boko Haram, and the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson testified “that the phenomena of Boko Haram is one of discrediting the Central Government in power for its failure to deliver services to people.”

Are you kidding?

I responded by asking why Boko Haram abducts and rapes Christian girls and uses force and coercion—even death—to convert Christians to Islam? Where are they getting their weapons? Are the IEDs coming from Iran? Not only should Nigeria be designated a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) for failing to protect believers, why isn't Boko Haram designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO)?

After three years of appealing to President Obama and the State Department to designate Boko Haram an FTO, on the day of markup on my legislation—the [Boko Haram Terrorist Designation Act of 2013](#)—to put Congress on record demanding FTO designation, the Administration designated Boko Haram a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

For too long, the world has looked away—a culture of denial—as radical Fulani militants, Boko Haram and ISIS/West Africa have waged a relentless campaign of terror, murder, and displacement across Nigeria, including the states of Plateau, Benue, and Kaduna.

According to [Open Doors](#), “more Christians are slaughtered in Nigeria than anywhere else in the world.”

Over [52,000 Christians in Nigeria](#) have reportedly been targeted and killed by Islamist extremist while approximately 34,000 *moderate* Muslims have been murdered in Islamist attacks, since 2009.

Some 19,000 churches have been attacked.

More than 7,000 have been murdered this year alone.

During my visit to Jos in 2013, I visited several churches that had been firebombed by Boko Haram and spent hours listening to survivors tell their stories.

Despite their numbing loss and pain, I was absolutely amazed at the survivors' deep faith, courage and resilience.

They pleaded with their own government—and the world—to end the cruelty and violence.

About 5 million Christians have been displaced and forced into Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps within Nigeria and in refugee camps at regional and sub-regional borders, according to an Intersociety report.

Open Doors reports: “While Christians used to be vulnerable only in the Muslim-majority northern states, this violence continues to spread into the Middle Belt and even further south. The attacks are shockingly brutal. Many believers are killed, particularly men, while women are often kidnapped and targeted for sexual violence. More believers are killed for their faith in Nigeria than anywhere else in the world. These militants also destroy homes, churches and livelihoods.”

The Nigerian government has a fundamental, constitutional obligation to protect its citizens. Yet, the brutal reality is that the perpetrators of these mass atrocities operate with total impunity.

This lack of accountability sends a chilling message that the lives of Christian farmers and their families are expendable. This failure has rightfully been called out for what it is by President Trump.

The United States must not stand by idly. This is why I have repeatedly championed legislation calling for action.

Last year the House Foreign Affairs adopted my resolution [H. Res 82](#) urgently calling on the Biden Administration to redesignate Nigeria a Country of Particular Concern. It passed on Feb 6, 2024, in committee but never came to the floor.

But the designation is only the first step. Now, we must rigorously utilize every tool embedded in the [International Religious freedom Act of 1988](#) authored by Congressman Frank Wolf and the [Frank Wolf International Religious Freedom Act of 2016](#) which I authored.

I urge the State Department to seriously consider supporting human-rights vetted Nigerian forces to defend and protect Nigerian Christians and moderate Muslims.

And [H. Res. 860](#), suggests three immediate actions:

First, we must condition U.S. foreign assistance. Aid must be tied to verifiable progress from the Nigerian government in preventing persecution, prosecuting perpetrators, and protecting all communities.

Second, we must provide direct humanitarian assistance to the faith-based groups working on the ground in the Middle Belt, who are best equipped to reach the internally displaced.

Third, we must impose targeted sanctions under the Global Magnitsky Act, using visa bans and asset freezes against individuals and entities responsible for these gross human rights abuses. The complicit must pay a price.

As [President Trump said](#), “Christianity is facing an existential threat in Nigeria...The United States cannot stand by while such atrocities are happening in Nigeria...”