

**Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Democracy,
Human Rights, and Labor, Jake McGee, Testimony for House
Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa on “President Trump’s
redesignation of Nigeria as a “Country of Particular Concern—CPC”**

November 20, 2025, 11am

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Jacobs, distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to join my colleague, Senior Bureau Official Pratt, to discuss the Trump Administration’s decision to redesignate Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) in accordance with the International Religious Freedom (IRF) Act of 1998.

President Trump’s decisive action to designate Nigeria as a CPC made clear that the United States stands ready to champion the rights of Christians and protect them from religious persecution. The religious freedom situation in Nigeria is well-documented in the annual IRF Reports. The IRF Act – designed by Congress nearly three decades ago – establishes religious freedom as a U.S. foreign policy priority and mandates that the President call out religious freedom violators as a reflection of the importance our nation places on America’s First Freedom.

As my colleague stated, the levels of violence and atrocities committed against Christians in Nigeria are appalling. Particularly in the Middle Belt, these attacks directly target Christian populations. Ample witness testimonies have confirmed attackers used religious language during their attacks and specifically identified Christians for killing, abduction, and rape. It is clear Nigerians are being attacked and killed because of their faith, and the Nigerian government must uphold its duty to protect them.

The United States stands with the civil society and religious actors brave enough to speak out about the tragic violence and discrimination they face in

Nigeria. When Bishop Wilfred Anagbe (Ah-nahg-bay) and Father Remigius Ihyula (Rehm-ee-gee-us Ee-yooh-la) testified before Chairman Smith's hearing last March about religious freedom, these two courageous religious leaders reported they received threats rather than protection from the Nigerian government. But the United States listened, and we will continue to listen and act until the Nigerian government protects religious freedom, strengthens its protections for vulnerable Christians, and holds perpetrators accountable.

In addition to these failures, Nigerian officials also continue to prosecute individuals for alleged "blasphemy," which stands in clear violation of Nigeria's obligation to safeguard free speech. Under the Sharia penal codes enforced in 12 of its states, Nigeria is one of only eight countries in the world that allows for penalties up to execution for blasphemy, along with Iran and Pakistan, which have long been designated CPCs. When authorities detain individuals accused of blasphemy, the judicial process often takes years while they remain in prison, sometimes on death row. Mobs often take the law into their own hands with impunity. For example, in 2022, a mob killed Deborah Samuel Yakubu, a student of Shehu Shagari College of Education Sokoto, in a heinous attack after she was accused of blasphemy. This young Christian woman's life was taken too soon, yet her murderers remain free.

With horrifying reports of discrimination, abuse, torture, disappearance, and even the murder of individuals simply trying to practice their faith freely and safely, religious freedom is not an abstraction but an obligation Nigeria must uphold. This Administration has heard the steady, clarion call from civil society and religious actors about the pernicious impact of the violence on religious communities.

The Nigerian government must protect religious freedom, strengthen protections of vulnerable Christians, hold perpetrators accountable, and make measurable progress towards ending this violence against Christians as well as any Nigerians persecuted for their faith.

We greatly appreciate the Committee's dedication to shedding light on the situation in Nigeria and support in advancing religious freedom not just in Nigeria, but around the world. I welcome your questions.