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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by European Centre for Law and Justice, The / Centre Européen pour le droit, les Justice et les droits de l'homme, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 May 2022]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.

## **REQUESTING THAT THE U.N. CONDEMN THE ATROCITIES COMMITTED AGAINST CHRISTIANS IN NIGERIA, WHICH HAS RESULTED IN THE INTERNAL MASS DISPLACEMENT OF PEOPLE, AND TAKE ACTION TO END THE VIOLENCE**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria's devastating humanitarian crisis is escalating and has already resulted in the deaths and kidnappings of thousands of Christians who are continually the targets of religiously motivated violence. In fact, in its 2022 World Watch List, Open Doors listed Nigeria as the 7th worst place for Christians to live.(1) According to the former chair of the Nigeria Human Rights Commission, "entire communities are being liquidated, displaced (and) destroyed" as a result of the violence.(2)

### **2. BACKGROUND**

The violence facing Christians in Nigeria primarily stems from Islamic extremist groups such as Boko Haram, Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), and the Fulani herdsmen. These groups are notorious for attacking Christians, burning down their homes, and kidnapping their children from schools. In fact, in the years since Boko Haram's uprising in 2009, the two groups have been responsible for the deaths of approximately 45,700 Christians; 5,191 Christians were killed in 2021 alone.(3) Over the past thirteen years, these groups have also been responsible for attacks on at least 17,500 churches and 2,000 Christian schools.(4)

The frequency with which reports come out about villages being destroyed, Christians being killed, or children being abducted is alarming and beyond cause for concern. It is clear that Nigeria is failing its people by not taking immediate and meaningful action to stop the violence. In fact, the U.N. Refugee Agency (UNRA) has estimated that 2.9 million people have become internally displaced in north-eastern Nigeria as a result of the violence.(5)

In the Lake Chad Basin region, around 12.5 million people remain displaced and in need of humanitarian assistance.(6) Of those, 5.3 million people do not have proper food supply.(7) It has been calculated that "Nigeria has the third highest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Africa . . . Overall, Africa has the largest number of IDPs in the world."(8)

The UNRA also recently noted that, while

[t]he Nigerian military, together with the Multinational Joint Task Force, have driven extremists from many of the areas they once controlled, . . . these gains have been overshadowed by an increase of Boko Haram attacks in neighbouring countries. Despite the return of Nigerian IDPs and refugees to accessible areas, the crisis remains acute.(9)

### **3. VIOLATIONS**

Boko Haram and the Fulani herdsmen have already carried out numerous attacks against Christians in 2022, causing further displacement of innocent Nigerian citizens, primarily Christians.

On May 16, 2022, Boko Haram planted a bomb in an IDP camp in Borno.(10) Fortunately, the bomb squad was able to defuse the bomb before it detonated.(11)

On May 3, 2022, terrorists attacked Chibok, a predominately Christian community, and killed eight people(12). The attack consisted of shootings, stealing of valuables, and

destruction of homes.(13) Additionally, “two residents said hundreds of residents had fled the area.”(14)

On April 29, 2022, a little boy was accompanying his mother to pick some vegetables and fruit for dinner when a herdsman attacked and killed the mother in front of the boy. (15) The little boy tried to help his mom, but the herdsman tried to attack him as well.(16) The little boy now lives in an IDP camp.(17) That same day, two other farmers were also killed.(18) Due to the frequency of these attacks, many farmers have fled their homes and farms.(19)

On April 21, 2022, Fulani herdsmen killed eleven people in Jato-Aka, including children.(20) The attack occurred in the middle of the day while people were working on their farms.(21) The herdsmen went from farm to farm and killed people silently.(22) The villagers believe that the attacks are occurring in order to obtain their land.(23) In the last three months, fifty people have died and 3,500 people are displaced.(24)

On the weekend of March 26, 2022, Fulani herdsmen kidnapped forty-five Christians—including a Roman Catholic priest—during a raid on six villages.(25) Pastor Opawoye stated: “Our people have been displaced, and many have been killed.”(26) Another resident recognized that many “Christians have been killed, many others displaced and complete Christian communities destroyed.”(27)

On March 24, 2022, Fulani herdsmen attacked ten predominately Christian communities.(28) During these attacks, the herdsmen abducted one hundred people, killed fifty Christians, and burned down a church.(29) Benue governor, Samuel Ortom said that the attacks created a large number of IDPs in Benue, and that 1.5 million people were living in poor conditions as a result.(30) Furthermore, the community received a warning about the attack before it occurred, but the police did nothing when the community asked for help.(31)

The governor of Niger, Abubakar Sani Bello, visited an IDP camp and revealed that Boko Haram had planted bombs throughout Galadima-Kogo, Shiroro.(32) He also explained that the police were working to neutralize the explosives.(33)

On February 25, 2022, Islamic West Africa Province terrorists killed three Christians in the Chibok area.(34) On the same day, a church building was destroyed in Borno state.(35) Boko Haram has destroyed numerous homes, businesses, storehouses, crops, and automobiles in order to displace Christians.(36)

IDPs are frequently forced to seek refuge in IDP camps. The conditions in one IDP camp were so bad that over twenty people, mostly children, lost their lives due to “consumption of unhygienic foods and lack of health care services.”(37)

Finally, we would also like to remind the Council of imprisoned teenager Leah Sharibu. Leah is one person out of the millions whose life has been completely altered due to the violence of Boko Haram. Leah, who was only 14 when kidnapped, has been held captive by Boko Haram for more than four years because of her Christian faith.(38) As a captive she has experienced unspeakable horror including being raped, impregnated, and twice has given birth to her captor’s children.(39) February 19, 2022, marked four years since Leah was abducted from her school,(40) and on May 14, 2022, Leah turned nineteen years old, marking her fifth birthday in captivity.(41)

#### 4. REQUEST

Nigeria must undertake immediate measures to protect its citizens. Every day, the people of Nigeria wake up with the fear that their children may be kidnapped, their homes burned down, or that they may be killed. This is the tragic reality for Christians living in Nigeria. Christians should be able to peacefully live out their faith and attend religious services without fearing that they will be attacked.

Additionally, Nigeria must do everything in its power to ensure the safe and immediate release of Leah Sharibu as well as all of those who have been kidnapped by Islamic extremists. We further urge the international community to do everything in their power to work with Nigeria to put an end to the violence and provide aid for the thousands of Nigerians who have become displaced.

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