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## Human Rights Council

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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

### **Written statement\* submitted by Jubilee Campaign, 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.

[25 February 2014]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.14-11878



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## **CRITICAL DRIVERS OF PERSECUTION IN NORTHERN NIGERIA FACT-FINDING MISSION (Sept-Dec 2013)**

Much of the violence in the last five years taking place in the northern states of Nigeria is attributed to Jihadist terror group Boko Haram. With over 5,000 casualties affecting citizens from fifteen countries in just five years,<sup>1</sup> Boko Haram earned a dubious distinction as the second most lethal terrorist organization in 2012.<sup>2</sup> While Boko Haram's bloody terrorist tactics certainly merit serious concern, the actions of this group have overshadowed a pattern of systemic religious violence and insidious persecution in Nigeria. This presentation looks in depth at the elements of religious discrimination that constitute the continuum of persecution in Nigeria.

### **A. "STREET LEVEL" PERSECUTION**

The "street level" refers to the general Muslim public, represented in every state in northern Nigeria. Given the relative peacefulness of southern Muslims and the comparative restiveness of northern Muslims in relation to Christians, our research findings indicate that there is a notable propensity to extremism within significant populations of northern Nigeria as distinct from practicing Muslims in the south.

#### **Emergence Of Child Soldiers**

The polygamous practices in Islam as well as child marriages result in a single family producing up to 40 children. Given lack of education and concomitant poverty, parents often surrender their children to itinerant street clerics and beggars. Many in the north reject western education, leaving their children in the hands of wandering mallams (Islamic clerics) to be instructed in the Quran while begging. This practice has produced literally millions of unemployed and unemployable youths who are ready foot soldiers for "Street" anti-Christian riots and, now with Boko Haram, "Sect" suicide bombers. Estimates place the numbers between 10-30 million.

#### **Political Violence**

A former military head of state, General Buhari had made a statement over a decade ago declaring that Muslims must never again allow an infidel to rule Nigeria. On another occasion, General Buhari declared his support for the imposition of Islamic Sharia law across Nigeria. He effectively positioned himself to be seen in the current election cycle as the "Muslim" candidate. According to subjects interviewed in Kaduna, which was among the states that witnessed the most violence, the following unsettling facts emerged about General Buhari's actions after he won the nomination of his party, the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC): 1) General Buhari's campaign was "based on religion" (Islam) and "built on hatred" for the ruling party (PDP) calling for attacks on "infidels" (Christians) and apostates (Muslims who supported the ruling party). 2) Pre-election campaigns of his party (CPC) were frightening to inhabitants of the city because of the mob mentality. 3) Voters were intimidated to vote for the CPC.

#### **Premeditation**

In Bauchi in January 2011, six Muslim boys abducted and gang-raped a 15-year old Christian girl. One of them was apprehended by security agents and a machete was found on his bike with the logo of the CPC on it. This was four months before the Post Election Violence and is highly indicative that the party was arming Muslims in advance of the election and that Christians were already being targeted prior to the election.

#### **Perpetration**

In Gombe state, we found direct links to the CPC. Members of the CPC had destroyed the PDP secretariat during campaigns before the election. General Buhari returned to the state to apologize for the actions of his supporters. After the elections, all nine Christian family members of the state chairman of the ruling party were burnt alive in his home. This time, General Buhari denied that the attackers were his supporters.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://factsnigeriaviolence.wordpress.com/spreadsheet/2012-3/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.start.umd.edu/start/announcements/announcement.asp?id=424>

### **Christian Targeting**

On a university campus in Zaria, Kaduna, where the chapel was burnt, we found that: A) The attacks had unmistakable anti-Christian bias, B) The attacks appeared to have tacit or implicit support from campus authorities who encountered the attackers, C) Attacks against the property of absent Christian students who were on vacation and thus did not vote locally evidences pre-existing animus unrelated to the polls.

Christians currently express concern that the composition of General Buhari's new opposition party is again heavily slanted towards Muslims to the disadvantage of Christians. All APC National Party Leadership Posts are held by Muslims. Even the ruling party has marginalized Christians in some state elections.

### **Christian Targeting Within the Family**

Members of the family are critical actors in persecution, especially in cases of conversion to Christianity. Muslim converts are generally forced to flee into hiding to avoid death for apostasy. Loss of employment, livelihood, family, friends and belongings is a usual occurrence in many instances.

### **B. "STATE LEVEL" PERSECUTION**

Direct persecution by governments is rampant in most northern Nigerian states. It usually occurs at the federal level when the presidency is occupied by a Muslim northerner. Thus, for the majority of Nigeria's existence, which has been chiefly under military rule, discrimination was more pronounced. Even now, it remains entrenched by institutionalized discriminatory policy and practice.

### **C. "SECT LEVEL" PERSECUTION**

There are numerous fanatical movements in northern Nigeria. These range from the radical Izalla sect as well as the Iran-backed Shia group to the more extreme jihadist terror groups Ansaru and Boko Haram. Boko Haram's atrocities in its decade-long history of violence have been well-documented so below are recent notable trends in 2013.

#### **School Massacres While In Session**

Boko Haram, whose name translates to "Western Education is Sin," regards educational institutions with great disdain and has burned down schools to prevent students from "westernizing" and attending non-Islamic schools. Since 2013, Boko Haram has been attacking schools while they are in session and killing students and teachers with impunity.

#### **Highway Slaughters:**

There has been an alarming increase in the number of highway attacks. Boko Haram has used roadblocks to stop travelers and discriminately kill them. Christians, police officers and members of military are targeted and killed. Boko Haram members force passengers out of their vehicles, check ID cards, and ask a series of questions to determine their identity. Any passenger unable to respond "correctly" is executed.

#### **Sustained Attacks on Churches:**

One of the expressed goals of Boko Haram is to rid the population of all Christians and enact an Islamist government implementing full Sharia law. In 2013 there was a sustained number of church attacks in spite of the increased security. These attacks include shootings, bombings, stabbings and burnings.

#### **Influx of Foreign Fighters into Nigeria:**

There is strong evidence confirming that insurgents from Cameroon, Chad and Niger are moving into northern Nigeria and joining the ranks of Boko Haram. There is confirmation of links between al-Qaeda and al-Shabab.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Strategic Suicide Bombings:**

For the first several years of Boko Haram's attacks, they mainly attacked people using small arms and machetes. Now,

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Latest-News-Wires/2013/1026/Foreign-fighters-part-of-Nigeria-s-Boko-Haram>

it is very common for them to use bombs and even suicide-bombing tactics.

**Random Attacks on Mosques:**

It is often stated that Boko Haram has killed more Muslims than Christians. Our data does not validate this. The key trend in 2013 is that instead of targeted individual Muslims for assassination, Boko Haram appears to be making more arbitrary attacks with greater lethality. 2013 witnessed the first known ambush of Muslim worshippers through a call to prayer.

**Home Invasions:**

Another prominent soft target that is being attacked frequently has been the individual homes of Christians. These are relatively easy targets, as there are few witnesses and almost no fear of a violent response from police or military force.

**Mass Destruction of Rural Communities:**

Mostly rural churches have no security, and they hardly make any news headlines when targeted. On the fringes of Yobe and Borno States, Christians are systematically exterminated. Many times when these communities are overrun by Islamist extremists, the assailants will take over their homes and farms, stealing or destroying much of their property (local Muslims have reportedly joined in the looting of infidels' properties). In Baga, Munguno, Gambaru Ngala, Konduga, and many areas of Borno, Christians have been forced to abandon their livelihoods and homes and flee.

**International Refugee Crisis:**

The situation is such that we now have significant refugees in neighboring countries with many villagers flocking in droves to Cameroon. The trend in 2012 was internal displacement to camps and locations in the middle belt. However, the U.N. High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) reported on October 29<sup>th</sup> 2013 that over 8,000 Nigerians have fled the violence and sought refuge in Cameroon, with an additional 2,000 Nigerian refugees in Niger and Chad. Their Abuja office later upgraded the number to 17,000. In 2014, thousands more have fled.

**Gender-Based Violence:**

Abducting Christian women is a more frequently used tactic of the Boko Haram militants. Many young girls are abducted, forced to convert and then forced into marriage with Boko Haram fighters. These abductees are also being used as human shields for the terrorists.

**CONCLUSION:**

The main reason Nigeria has not descended into a religious civil strife is the resilience and long suffering of Nigerian Christians who refrained from retaliating. Out of about 400 religious incidents in northern Nigeria in 2012, none was initiated by Christians. Reprisals occurred only on three occasions.

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