



*Christian
Solidarity Worldwide*

Nigeria

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1 COUNTRY PROFILE

1.1 MAP AND GENERAL PROFILE1



Country Name
Capital

Federal Republic of Nigeria
Abuja

Geography

Border countries

Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger

Border waters

Atlantic Ocean (Gulf of Guinea)

Area

923 768 sq km

Terrain

Mangrove swampland along the coastline gives way to tropical rainforest and then to savannah plateaux and hills in the centre. Semi desert in the extreme north

Climate

Varied. Equatorial in the south, tropical in the centre, arid in the north

People

Population

126, 635, 6262

Life expectancy

51.07 years

Ethnic Groups

There are over 250 ethnic groups, the largest and most influential are: Hausa and Fulani (29%), Yoruba ((21%), Igbo (18%), Ijaw (10%), Kanuri (4%), Ibibio (3.5%), Tiv (2.5%)

Religions

50% Muslim; 40% Christian; 10% Indigenous/Traditional Believers

Literacy³

Male: 67.3%; Female: 47.3% (1995 est)

Languages

English (official), Fulani, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba

1 statistics according to The World Factbook, 2001

2 July 2001 estimate

3 age 15 and over can read and write

1.1.1 Government

The country is currently experiencing a bumpy transition to democracy and civilian rule following decades of military rule interspersed with short periods of weak and often corrupt civilian government.

The 1999 Constitution was drawn up by the last military ruler, General Abubakar, and is based on the country's 1979 Constitution. It has a bill of rights incorporated into it, and provides for Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of government. The Executive consists of a chief of state, a head of government and a cabinet known as the Federal Executive Council. President Olusegun Obasanjo is currently both chief of state and head of government. The Federal President is elected by popular mandate for no more than two four-year terms. The next elections will take place in 2003.

The Legislature is composed of a bicameral National Assembly similar to that of the United States. The upper house, or Senate, has 360 seats, while the House of Representatives has 360. Members of both Houses are elected for four-year terms. The next elections will take place in 2003.

President Obasanjo is a member of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). The PDP took 62.8% of the vote at the last election and is currently the largest party in both Houses, with 212 Representatives and 65 Senators. The PDP also holds 21 of the 36 state governorships. Other Nigerian political parties are the All People's Party (APP), the Alliance for Democracy (AD), and the People's Democratic Party (PDP). A new Electoral Bill is currently making its way through Parliament that will, if passed, allow for the registration of new political parties.

The National Assembly and the federal presidency have not enjoyed the best of relations. The first Senate president was impeached for incompetence and his successor was removed following an internal investigation that unearthed possible corruption. The first Speaker of the House of Representatives was removed for lying about his age and qualifications, and the current Speaker narrowly survived calls for his resignation.

The Nigerian Judiciary is composed of a Supreme Court and a Federal Court of Appeal. The Provisional Ruling Council set up by the late dictator General Sani Abacha after he dissolved all democratic structures appointed the members of Nigeria's Supreme Court. Appeal Court judges are appointed by the Federal Government on the advice of the Advisory Judicial Committee.

Nigeria's legal system is modelled on English Common Law. However, it also provides for customary Shari'ah courts at state level with jurisdiction over personal and family matters.

1.1.2 Economy

Nigeria is rich in and heavily dependent on oil. It is the leading sub-Saharan oil producer, pumping 2.2 million barrels a day. However, years of corruption, political instability and poor macro economic management under successive military and military-backed regimes,

have meant that the country and the majority of its people have not benefited fully from this resource. Consequently Nigeria's annual per head income is amongst the lowest in the world⁴. Other factors contributing to Nigeria's lamentable economic condition are a poor infrastructure and a federal structure that has strengthened individual states at the expense of the federal government thus complicating the process of enacting a national economic policy.

The country owes \$32.3 billion in debt. Upon taking power the new civilian government embarked on economic reforms aimed at reducing Nigeria's debt and its over dependence on oil. As a result in August 2000 Nigeria received a debt restructuring deal from the Paris Club, a \$1 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and in December 2000 Paris Club creditors rescheduled approximately \$23.4 billion of the country's debt.

Nigeria also exports refined products, hides, natural gas, timber and tin.

Nigeria's agricultural sector has failed to keep pace with the country's burgeoning population. As a result the country has changed from being a large net exporter of food to an importer.

1.1.3 Military

Nigeria has an army, navy and air force. Military expenditure accounts for 10% of the nation's GDP. Nigeria was instrumental in the creation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and its armed forces play a major role in ECOWAS regional peacekeeping initiatives.

President Obasanjo has vowed to reform the Nigerian Army and to turn it into an army that will support rather than usurp democracy. Following his inauguration all serving military officers were retired.

1.1.4 Transnational Disputes

A dispute in the Lake Chad area bordering Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger that led to altercations in the past has been resolved and awaits ratification by the concerned parties. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is currently looking into a border dispute a dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon involving land and maritime boundaries around the Bakasi Peninsula, and into a tripartite maritime boundary and economic zone dispute involving Nigeria Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea.

Criminal elements have made Nigeria into a key country facilitating the trafficking of heroin from south East Asia and cocaine from South America to Europe, North America, East Asia and elsewhere in Africa. Several Nigerians are currently facing execution in Thailand for drugs trafficking offences.

Criminal elements in Nigeria have also been implicated in the trafficking of children destitute families and poorer West African countries to richer ones, such as Gabon. Many

⁴ Foreign and Commonwealth Office Briefing Paper

Nigerian women are trafficked to Europe; some are lured by false offers of employment. Once in Europe they are forced into prostitution in order to pay their fares.

1.2 HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The area known as Nigeria has in the past been home to several kingdoms, including the Hausa and Kanem Kingdoms of the north east, the Sokoto Caliphate of the north-west, the Yoruba Kingdoms of Benin, Oyo and Ife in south-western and south-central Nigeria, and the Igbo Kingdom of Nri.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to reach the area in 1472. However, by 1500 Islam had a strong grip on the northern areas of Katsina, Kano and Zaria. The English arrived in the area in 1553, and 9 years later were delivering slaves to Haiti. This trans-Atlantic slave trade continued for 3 centuries.

At the Conference of Berlin in 1885 today's Nigeria was recognised as being in the British sphere of influence. In 1893 the Niger Coast Protectorate was established in the south, and by 1900 the British Government had full claim to both northern and southern Nigeria. Consequently, in 1914 the amalgam of diverse peoples with strong tribal affiliations became known as the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria.

In order to facilitate their administration of the vast colony, the British introduced a system of 'Indirect Rule' in northern Nigeria whereby colonial officers shared power with the Hausa/ Fulani Sokoto Caliphate as a cost effective means of controlling other northern ethnic groups. The Caliphate had been founded in 1808 in the aftermath of a Fulani Jihad led by Osman Dan Fodio, but had not managed to gain control of the whole of northern Nigerian. As a result of Indirect Rule the Caliphate extended its influence over every non-Muslim ethnic group in the north and centre of the country, many of which had successfully resisted the Jihad. The colonial administration then went on to imitate the procedure initiated by the colonial administration in Sudan and create Shari'ah courts for Muslims to deal with aspects of civil law and customary ones for minority ethnic groups.

Southern Nigeria, including the eastern and western regions, was kept under direct British control, and unlike the feudal north, inhabitants of these areas acquired Western education. By the early 1950's, when Nigeria was split into 3 autonomous regions (Northern, Southern and Eastern), the majority of administrators running the colonial civil service in the north, were southerners and easterners. As a result, from 1954 onwards southerners and easterners began to be dismissed from northern public services, a policy that continued even through the early independence era in the 1960's.

Nigeria gained its independence in 1960. The first elected Prime Minister, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, was a northerner. This caused resentment amongst other peoples in the federation, particularly in view of the fact that Tafawa Balewa had won the premiership due to the comparative vastness of the northern region.

Tafawa Balewa won the premiership again in 1964, in a ballot characterised by corruption and violence. In 1966, Tafawa Balewa was killed, along with the prime ministers of the northern and western regions, in a military coup led by the Igbo General, Aguiyi Ironsi, who

abolished the federation, declared Nigeria a unitary state, suspended the Constitution and established military governors in each of the regions.

Fearing Igbo dominance, northern troops, who made up the bulk of the armed forces while Igbos made up the officer corps, staged a counter-coup in July of 1966 that resulted in Ironsi's murder. Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon, a Northerner, replaced Ironsi as chairman of the federal military government, and proceeded to divide Nigeria into 12 states.

Following the coup mobs in many northern cities began to massacre easterners, and particularly members of the Igbo tribe. Lieutenant Colonel Odemugwu Ojukwu of the Igbo dominated Eastern Region objected to the creation of 12 federal states, charged Gowon with insensitivity towards the Igbo predicament, and restricted all non-easterners from his region. In 1967 the Eastern Region seceded from the federation, a decision that heralded the beginning of the Biafran War.

The civil war ended in 1970, with the surrender of Biafran troops to federal forces. In 1975 a now extremely corrupt General Gowon was removed from office in a bloodless coup after renegeing on a promise to restore civilian rule. General Murtala Rufai Mohammed became the new leader. General Murtala Mohammed dismissed the 12 state governors and immediately embarked on a programme of reform and democratisation. Unfortunately Murtala Mohammed was assassinated in an attempted coup in 1976, 6 months after seizing power. His deputy, General Olusegun Obasanjo instituted the reforms begun by Murtala Mohammed, creating 19 federal states and revamping the Constitution before holding democratic elections in 1979 and relinquishing power to the civilian regime of Shehu Shagari. Shagari managed to win a second term in office, but was overthrown and arrested on 31 December 1983 in a military coup led by General Mohammed Buhari.

Buhari established the Supreme Military Council (SMC) and from 1983 to 1985 conducted what he termed a 'War Against Indiscipline' (WAI) aimed at uncovering the corruption pervading government and society. However, this soon descended into a war against journalists and other opponents of his regime, and in August 1985, he too was overthrown in a bloodless coup led this time by General Ibrahim Babangida.

General Babangida scrapped the SMC, replacing it with the Armed Forces Ruling Council, an organisation made up of military officers (AFRG), that was itself eventually replaced by the National Defence and Security Council (NDSC). In January 1986 the General promised to restore civilian rule by October 1990, a date he later postponed to October 1992, and began to allow a greater degree of political activity. However, in February 1986 Babangida announced that Nigeria was in the process of joining the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, a decision that provoked inter-religious violence throughout the country.

Candidates from the National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP), the only 2 political parties that were permitted to exist, contested the 1992 elections. The presidential primaries were marked by corruption, boycotts, violence, and illegality, and in October of that year Babangida cancelled the results, banned the leaders of both parties, and pushed the date of the presidential election back to mid 1993. The new primaries were held in March 1993 and followed by elections in June during which the SPD

led by Chief Abiola, a Yoruba Muslim from south western Nigeria, took an unexpected lead in the early returns. On 23 June Babangida went on air to annul the election results, precipitating riots in the southwest during which over 100 people were killed. The second round of presidential elections scheduled for August 1993 were not held, and, under pressure from the NDSC Babangida stepped down in favour of a personally chosen interim government headed by the businessman Chief Ernest A Shonekan.

Chief Shonekan promised new elections for 1994. However, civil unrest continued unabated. Shonekan resigned and on 17 November General Sani Abacha, the defence minister and most senior officer in the interim government, seized power. He immediately abolished the constitution, and promised a short tenure. However, Abacha's undemocratic tendencies were evident from the start. First, the Nigerian senate was obliged to impeach its president, Iyorchia Ayu, who was a strong opponent of the interim government. Abacha then proceeded to arrest a number of key opposition figures that had combined to form the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO). He went on to maintain military control of state governorships in order to use these as patronage and to arrest Chief Abiola, charging him with treason after the latter had declared himself president.

Abiola's arrest sparked off a series of strikes and riots that were suppressed by the army. Trade Union leaders were dismissed, the unions were put under military control and press freedom was severely curtailed. However, the continuing violence persuaded the military government to call a constitutional conference that set January 1995 as a deadline for a return to civilian rule.

To celebrate the completion of a draft constitution, Abacha permitted a resumption of limited political activity. However, Abacha did not announce relief for political parties or a deadline for elections, and during that year he proceeded to arrest Obasanjo, former Vice President Shehu Musa Yar'Adua and other key military leaders, sentencing them to death for their participation in an alleged coup attempt. Abacha later gave way to international pressure, reprieving the alleged coup plotters but sentencing them to long periods of imprisonment. However, he went on to execute the writer, Ken Saro Wiwa and 8 other members of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) on a trumped up murder charge.

Following the executions Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth and the United States, and the European Union and South Africa imposed arms and visa restrictions on the country. In a half-hearted move to placate the international community Abacha promised to restore civilian rule on 1 October 1998, but continued to subject the nation to an unprecedented level of corruption and a reign of terror. In June 1996 Mrs. Kudirat Abiola was assassinated, and in December 1997 Shehu Musa Yar'Adua died in prison of suspected poisoning.

In the run up to elections in 1998 all five legal political parties were obliged to adopt General Abacha as their presidential candidate. However, just as he was poised to stand as the sole candidate in the August presidential elections, Abacha died unexpectedly of a heart attack. He was succeeded by General Abubakar, who promised to restore civilian rule by 1999. Unfortunately, Mashood Abiola died in detention, ostensibly of a heart attack, before

he could be released under the terms of a general amnesty for political prisoners, triggering rioting in Lagos that left over 60 people dead.

Abubakar created an Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to oversee elections and permitted the formation of new political parties. The first major party to launch itself was the People's Democratic Party, which chose Olusegun Obasanjo as its presidential candidate. Former finance minister Olu Falae was selected by the Alliance for Democracy as presidential candidate. The executive of the All Peoples Party initially chose little known Ogbonnaya Onu as their presidential candidate, but eventually Falae was named joint candidate for the All Peoples Party and the Alliance for Democracy.

In May 1999 a new Constitution was adopted based on the 1979 Constitution, and on 29 May 1999 Olusegun Obasanjo was sworn in as Nigeria's democratically elected civilian President. In accordance with the Constitution his cabinet comprised of one minister from each of the 36 states. President Obasanjo also appointed a group of Special Advisors.

1.3 GENERAL HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS

1.3.1 Thematic concerns

International human rights organisations continue to voice their concerns about the spiralling inter-religious and inter-ethnic violence that has occurred since northern governors began campaigning for the imposition of full Shari'ah Law in northern states, and the consequent restrictions imposed on non-Muslims and women in these states. There has been growing unease about the nature of Shari'ah punishments, some of which contravene Nigeria's constitutional and international human rights obligations. There is disquiet about the government's seeming inability to adequately tackle the constitutional implications of the Shari'ah issue and the consequent bouts of inter-communal violence that have cost thousands of lives. There is also concern about the excessive use of lethal force on the part of the armed forces during attempts to quell communal violence.

1.3.2 Nigeria and the United Nations

Nigeria has signed and ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights⁵, the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination⁶, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women⁷, the Convention on the Rights of the Child⁸, and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Convention against Torture (CAT))⁹.

⁵ The country acceded to both Covenants in 1993

⁶ 1967

⁷ 1985

⁸ 1991

⁹ 2001

Nigeria is a state party to the Convention on the Status of Refugees¹⁰ and its Optional Protocol,¹¹ and the Geneva Conventions¹² and their Additional Protocols.¹³ The country has also ratified several International Labour Organisation conventions, namely the Conventions on Forced Labour, on Freedom of Association and the Protection of the Right to Organise, on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining, on the Abolition of Forced Labour,¹⁴ and on Equal Remuneration.¹⁵ The country has also ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights.¹⁶

1.4 RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

Muslims make up roughly 50% of Nigeria's population and form an overwhelming majority in the north of the country. Sunni Islam predominates in Nigeria, as does the Maliki School of Islamic law. However, not all Nigerian Muslims are Sunni. Until recently most Muslims were members of such Sufi brotherhoods such as the Qadiriyya and the Tijaniyya. There are also a number of Muslims in southwestern Nigeria belonging to the Ahmmadiya sect.

As the 20th century wore on Islam in Nigeria began to take on a more radical and Islamist character. In 1978, the Izala movement came into being. This movement began in Jos and was also known as the Jama'at Izalatil Bidawa Iqamatus Sunnah (Movement Against Negative Innovations and for Orthodoxy). Izala is ultra orthodox and seeks the abolition of practices that are not contained in the Qur'an, the Sunnah or Hadith.

Another movement founded in the late 70s is known as Maitatsine. The Maitatsine movement was extremely influential in the 1960s and 1970s until its brutal suppression in the early 1980s. This movement, which has its stronghold in Kano and appealed primarily to the unemployed, exhibits deep antipathy for the federal state and its agents. During the 80s the Maitatsine movement was responsible for a series of riots in northern states. It has been more or less underground since 1985.

Yet another Islamist group is the Muslim Brotherhood, led by Ibrahim Zakzaky. This group practices Sunni Islam but is also known as the Shi'ites, since it took inspiration from the advent and activities of Ayatollah Khomeini. The Shi'ites reject the Nigerian constitution, flag and legal institutions, accepting only Shari'ah as a source of law and authority.

Christians form approximately 40 % of the Nigerian population and are in the majority in the South. They hail from every denomination-Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, an increasing number of Pentecostal churches-with Catholicism dominating the southeast, where the Igbo form the largest ethnic group. However, the Yoruba heartland in the southwest is divided

¹⁰1967

¹¹1968

¹²1961

¹³1988

¹⁴Nigeria acceded to all of these in 1960

¹⁵1974

¹⁶1983

between Christians, Muslims and Traditional believers. The latter are found throughout the country. There are also some urban-based religious movements such as Krishna Consciousness, the Grail Message Lodge and the Guru Maharaji.

Both Islam and Christianity are represented by umbrella organisations or coordinating bodies, namely, the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN).

Religious and ethnic tensions have led to periodic outbreaks of violence throughout Nigeria's history, with Christians complaining of the increasing Islamisation of Nigeria and marginalisation of Christians, and Muslims bemoaning the permeation of Christianity into all aspects of public life. Successive Federal Governments have at times sought to defuse these tensions by fostering the ideal of national unity.

Until 1999 northerners dominated political life and the military, while economic life was largely in the hands of the more modern, entrepreneurial south. After 1999 the northern power elite felt it had lost political power to the south as a result of the election of President Obasanjo, a born-again Christian. This group felt particularly threatened by the President's avowed aim of tackling corruption and bringing to book those responsible for looting public funds. Many political observers feel that the campaign spearheaded by northern Muslim political and community leaders for the implementation of full Shari'ah law is part of an overall campaign to destabilise the Obasanjo government and thwart its chances of a second term in office.

The campaign won the backing of disadvantaged northerners who had not benefited from the country's wealth and felt that Shari'ah would end the culture of corruption prevalent in the country. The campaign also drew on a chronic desire for full Shari'ah on the part of the Muslim community, and on the animosity felt by many against the inclusion of so-called western human rights provisions within the Nigerian Constitution. 12 of Nigeria's 36 states have now implemented or are on the verge of implementing full Shari'ah law. These states are Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, Yobe, Borno, Kebbi, Niger, Kaduna, Bauchi and Gombe.

The institution of Shari'ah law as state law has led to an increase in the frequency of violent incidents in a nation where ethnic lines usually coincide with religious ones. Over 6,000 people are said to have died in religious and ethnic clashes arising from confrontations over Shari'ah law since 1999.

2 REVIEW OF 2001

2.1 SUMMARY

Christian Solidarity Worldwide is concerned about the constitutional implications and chronic instability engendered by the Shari'ah issue, as well as the discriminatory impact of Shari'ah Law on the lives of Christian and other non-Muslim minorities living in northern Nigeria.

2.2 THE SHARI'AH ISSUE

2.2.1 Shari'ah and the Nigerian Constitution

In the interests of national unity, the Nigerian Federal Constitution of 1999 prohibits the establishment of a state religion and allows for freedom of religion. Chapter 1 Part II Article 10 of the Constitution declares that

The Government of the Federation or of a State shall not adopt any religion as State Religion.

The imposition of full Shari'ah and its de facto position as the primary source of state law could thus be seen as constituting at best a challenge and at worst a violation of the federal constitution. As such the Shari'ah issue potentially pose a serious threat to the country's Constitution and national integrity.

2.2.2 Shari'ah Punishments and the Nigerian Constitution

In certain instances Shari'ah law allows for such punishments as stoning, flogging and the amputation of limbs. However, Section 42:1 of the federal Constitution states that:

A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion, or political opinion shall not, by any reason only that he is such a person

(a) be subjected either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria or any executive or administration of the government, to disabilities or restrictions to which citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religions or political opinions are not made subject.

Thus the application of such Shari'ah punishments as those outlined above could be seen as constituting a contravention of Nigeria's national obligations under the Federal Constitution and its international legal obligations under CAT.

There is growing concern that in its application Shari'ah law discriminates against the poor. So far the only people who have been sentenced to such severe punishments as amputation and stoning have come from disadvantaged segments of society, while high-powered embezzlers of state funds appear to have gone unpunished.

2.2.3 Shari'ah and the Christian Minority in the North

There have been numerous reports of anti-Christian activity in the north. In some instances, alleged violations of Shari'ah Law has been used to justify attacks on Christians despite the fact that whilst campaigning for full Shari'ah most northern state governors have stressed that it would only apply to Moslems. In December 2000 a Shari'ah enforcement squad in Kano city broke into the house of an Igbo Christian, Livinius Obi, who they accused of having broke Islamic Law by selling alcohol. He was given 80 lashes and left unconscious. He also claimed that money was stolen from his home by the enforcers and that he was intimidated into withdrawing charges against his attackers. In another incident that occurred on 31 December, Boniface Nkantiom and his family were flogged by Shari'ah enforcers, who accused him of running a hotel. They were beaten with clubs and machetes and required medical treatment in the aftermath of the attack.

Christian places of worship are frequently targeted for attack or demolition. In February 2001 4 people died and 2 churches were vandalised in Gombe state following a visit to the area by the Israeli Ambassador at the invitation of the Muslim State Governor, and on 14th February two churches were burned in Jigawa state. Later, several churches were targeted for demolition in Niger State on the pretext that they were 'illegal structures built on illegal land.

Sporadic outbreaks of violence continued throughout the year. On 21st May a church and mosque were burned, shops were vandalised, and several people were injured in Kumo town, Gombe State following the introduction of a bill proposing the implementation of full Shari'ah law, and on 30th June, ten people were killed in Kaduna state and two Islamic schools were destroyed during riots sparked off by the appointment of a Muslim community leader to the predominantly Christian community of Kurama.

In July violence erupted in Tafawa Balewa town in Bauchi following the introduction of full Shari'ah after a Muslim bus driver insisted that male and female passengers should sit separately. During the ensuing violence Christians attacked mosques, Muslims attacked churches, and the fighting spread to several surrounding towns and villages, causing hundreds of deaths. It was alleged that many attacks were instigated by local Muslims associated with extremists from Chad. On 27 August, 5 Christian students were murdered at Kaduna State Polytechnic in Zaria, Kaduna following reports that Christians had won student council elections, and on 7th September an attack on a Christian woman who had entered a Muslim area in the previously tranquil and tolerant city of Jos culminated in 11 days of street fighting during which close to 1000 people were killed.

Inter-religious tensions mounted further in the aftermath of 11th September, when the United States mounted air strikes against Afghanistan. On 6th October, 3 churches and a Christian business were set on fire in Kaduna City, and posters of Osama Bin Laden were pasted to the gutted remains. Following this incident a peaceful protest in Kano against US involvement in Afghanistan was high jacked by militants who invaded the city's Christian quarter. At least 100 people were murdered during the 5 days of rioting that ensued. Then on 2nd November 11 people were killed during a riot in Gwantu town, Kaduna State as local leaders began the implementation of Shari'ah law. Amongst the dead were a Baptist Reverend, Safe

Abakan, and his brother who are reported to have been murdered after being lured to the palace of the Muslim chief of Numana for peace negotiations.

Incidences of inter-religious violence are now occurring in South Western Nigeria, an area divided equally between Christians and Muslims, where such violence was previously unheard of. In November 2001 at least two Christians were killed and at least nine churches were vandalised when up to 1000 Muslims went on a five hour rampage in the town of Osogbo in a riot said to have been precipitated by the Tafsir (the daily Ramadan sermon), of a radical preacher. In an indication of the organised nature of the violence, local reports suggest that members of Tobliq, an Islamic group from a neighbouring state, were reported to have come to Osogbo specifically to organise local Muslims for the riot. Following this event, Muslim youths vandalised four churches in Ilorin, the capital of Kwara, a state situated in central Nigeria.

In some Shari'ah states officials and agencies have been directly implicated in the destruction of churches. Sokoto State Urban and regional Planning Agency is said to have been vandalizing church properties, and church buildings have been demolished by government agents in Mabera, Mujaya and in an area known as The Old Airport. In Zamfara Christians are unable to build churches or teach religion in schools, and the local president of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has said that Christians are being discriminated against during the hand out of state grants and contracts. Moreover, on 19 January Zamfara's governor broke into St. Dominic's Catholic Church in Dashi and announced plans to forcibly convert it into an Islamic school. By 14 February 2001 the church had been destroyed.

In several cases Shari'ah has provided a rallying point for those who seek a release for sectarian resentment or a cloak for criminal activity. For example, in the capital cities of Adamwa, Yobe, Sokoto and Borno States, Christians, their properties and their churches were attacked after Moslem extremists accused them being responsible for the lunar eclipse in January 2001.

2.2.4 Shari'ah and Women

Shari'ah states have created a socio-political climate conducive to gender discrimination of varying degrees of severity. At one end of the spectrum, in some states women have can no longer travel in mixed-sex public transport and must dress according to Islamic strictures. At the other, in cases involving Zina (fornication), women receive severe sentences from Islamic courts, while the men they were involved with tend to go unpunished.

The first case to highlight the prevalence of such discrimination gained international attention due to the age of the person concerned and the severity of the punishment imposed. This involved Bariya Ibrahim Maguzu, a 17-year-old Muslim teenager from Zamfara, who gave birth to a child after being forced by her father to have sex with 3 men. However, Islamic law states that the testimony of a woman is inadequate in such cases, and that a charge of Zina can only be proved against a man if there are four male witnesses to the event. The girl was sentenced to 180 lashes, 80 of which were added because she was

deemed to have 'falsely accused' the 3 men involved. She was also obliged to marry one of several men who had volunteered to become her husband.

There have been two similar cases involving pregnant teenagers from Katsina and Bauchi respectively, both of whom failed to produce the prerequisite four witnesses against the men they were involved with. However, the case that is currently causing the most concern both nationally and internationally is that of Safiya Hussaini Tungar Tudu, a middle-aged divorcee who was sentenced to death by stoning for bearing a child out of wedlock. Charges against the alleged father were dropped. The man concerned denied responsibility and again, the defendant was unable to produce four witnesses to testify to his guilt. Safiya's lawyer is currently appealing against the sentence on the grounds that the alleged offence occurred prior to the implementation of full Shari'ah Law, thus rendering the sentence retroactive. In the meantime a Sokoto court has tried a second woman, Hasfatu Abubakar, on a similar offence, but cleared her of all charges because her accusers had given contradictory evidence.

Christian women have also been adversely affected by the advent of the Shari'ah crisis and are increasingly vulnerable to attack. There were reports that several women were stripped naked and raped during the lunar eclipse riots in that occurred in Damaturu in January 2001. During 2001 there were also reports that Christian women were deliberately targeted for rape in Sokoto State. There are also reports that in some areas of the north single women cannot rent apartments for fear of being accused of being prostitutes.

2.2.5 Shari'ah and Muslim Converts to Christianity

Although the Nigerian Constitution allows for Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion, including the freedom to change ones belief (Article 38 (Chapter IV)) Muslim converts to Christianity are extremely vulnerable, since conversion to another religion is seen as apostasy, a crime punishable by death under Shari'ah law.

In the past conventional wisdom held that converts would be safe if they left the north and settled elsewhere in the country, and, particularly in urban areas. Previously the majority of inter religious violence in the south consisted of sporadic retaliatory attacks by southern vigilante groups on northern long-term migrants in response to anti-Christian activities in the north. However, this may no longer be the case. Population migration has meant that throughout the country, there are significant non-indigenous minorities in every region. Thus in a country racked by increasing lawlessness where ones name can give away ones religion of birth, Muslim converts to Christianity are easily identifiable and are increasingly vulnerable. On 6th August 2001, a convert named James Yahaya was shot dead as he slept. The incident occurred in Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria, which is situated in central Nigeria. Several converts are currently in church run safe houses in the north.

2.2.6 *Shari'ah and Traditional Believers*

Traditional believers have also been subjected to Shari'ah. 16 people died in Niger state when local Kambaris clashed with Hausa settlers and Shari'ah enforcers who objected to the Kambari tradition of brewing local alcohol known as Pito, which they believe enhances the performance of their farms. Although the incident was subsequently investigated, a local government spokesman, Alhaji Ahaibu Bageji, publicly stated that if lives had been lost in the process of enforcing Shari'ah, then the state government would be offering no apology.

2.3 CSW ACTION

2.3.1 *Prayer*

Through its quarterly *Prayer Calendar* CSW initiated prayer on specific issues, particularly for the churches, church members and president of Nigeria. There was also consistent prayer for an end to the chronic cycle of tribal and religious violence in the country

2.3.2 *Information sharing*

CSW briefed British MPs, MEPs and members of the legal profession regarding the prevailing situation in Nigeria.

2.3.3 *Publicity*

CSW issued press releases to the Christian, National and international press, and ran features in its bi-monthly magazine *Response*.

2.3.4 *Campaigning initiatives*

Through its publication *Action Info* CSW initiated a letter writing campaign concerning the vandalising of church property and the attacks on Christians, and, in particular, the targeting of Christian women for rape.

2.4 RESPONSES FROM THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT

Responses to the letter writing campaign have been positive, and the Nigerian government has stated that events in the north are receiving attention at the very highest levels of government.

2.5 CONCLUSIONS

The Shari'ah issue poses a threat to the current presidency, and the continuing violence may have undermined President Obasanjo's chances of a second term in office. The Obasanjo government has appeared reluctant to take action to halt the implementation of full Shari'ah or to mount a legal challenge against the Shari'ah States, perhaps for fear of being viewed as anti-Muslim. Instead the government has until recently played down the dangers posed by Shari'ah, with the president stating that the problem is 'political' and will fizzle out. Clearly, this has not occurred, and recent judicial decisions based on Shari'ah, such as the

sentences of death by stoning, are forcing the government to finally confront the problems posed by the imposition of Shari'ah law.

In the south there is a general feeling that President Obasanjo has been overly cautious when dealing with the issue of Shari'ah and has shied away from seeking a Supreme Court ruling on the constitutionality of Shari'ah as state law. On the other hand, a call by southern governors for a greater control of the country's natural resources, which are situated predominantly in southern Nigeria, was swiftly met by legal action on the part of a Federal government that has appeared reluctant to tackle the constitutional challenge posed by Shari'ah. Moreover, as southerners have watched the growing influx of Christians fleeing attacks in the north, ethno-religious tensions have surfaced in the south. Clashes have occurred between local vigilante groups and northerners who had settled in the south.

The clamour for full Shari'ah has proved to be a destabilising factor in a country that is an amalgam of diverse tribes, especially since tribal lines often coincide with religious ones.

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