

PETITION

SEEKING URGENT INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT TO PREVENT OR STOP GENOCIDE AND OTHER ATROCITY CRIMES IN NIGERIA

ADDRESSEE:

MS ALICE WAIRIMU NDERITU,
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL AND SPECIAL ADVISOR OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
ON THE PREVENTION OF GENOCIDE,
THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON GENOCIDE PREVENTION AND THE RESPONSIBILITY
TO PROTECT,
THE UNITED NATIONS,
NEW YORK,
USA

PETITIONERS:

1. THE REVEREND DR SAMSON OLASUPO
ADENIYI AYOKUNLE FOR THE
CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA
(CAN)
2. THE REVEREND DR GIDEON PARA-
MALLAM FOR THE GIDEON AND FUNMI
PARA-MALLAM PEACE FOUNDATION
3. DR JOHN EIBNER FOR CHRISTIAN
SOLIDARITY INTERNATIONAL (CSI)
4. DR KYLE ABTS FOR THE
INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE ON
NIGERIA (ICON)
5. PROFESSOR JOHN AKINTAYO FOR THE
CHRISTIAN LAWYERS FELLOWSHIP OF
NIGERIA (CLASFON)
6. PROFESSOR JOHN DURODOLA FOR THE
OVERSEAS FELLOWSHIP OF NIGERIAN
CHRISTIANS (OFNC)
7. THE BARONESS COX FOR THE
HUMANITARIAN AID RELIEF TRUST
(HART)

8. DR GLORIA PULDU FOR THE LEAH FOUNDATION
9. REVEREND DR AKINYELE ABIODUN JAMES FOR THE NIGERIAN EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP (NEF)
10. PASTOR AYO ADEDOYIN, FOR THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE (PSJUK)
11. DR NGOZI MARTIN-OGUIKE FOR EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN (ECW) OF ST JOHN'S PARISH, SEWAREN, NEW JERSEY
12. F VISSCHER MSc, OBSERVATORY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN AFRICA (ORFA)
13. VENERABLE MARTIN OGUIKE, PHD, ST JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SEWAREN, NEW JERSEY
14. EVANGELIST KENJIKA IWUAGWU, CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD, ROSEDALE, NEW YORK

**PETITION SEEKING URGENT INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT TO PREVENT OR
STOP GENOCIDE AND OTHER ATROCITY CRIMES IN NIGERIA**

1. We, the petitioning individuals and groups, are all involved in supporting Nigerian Christians who have been and are being persecuted for their faith.
2. All of us have separately been part of a decade or more of monitoring, researching, in-depth reporting and campaigning about discrimination and violence in Nigeria, and the failure of successive governments to ensure law and order and basic rights protections on an equal basis. We have watched with frustration and dismay as lawlessness and impunity have encouraged Islamist violence, the range of individuals and groups targeting Christians has mutated and grown, and the poison of fundamentalist repression has spread steadily southwards. We are extremely concerned at the deteriorating situation in Nigeria. All in Nigeria are affected, but the evidence that we have been gathering shows without a doubt that there has been a sharp increase in the persecution of Christians by Islamist groups, over and above all other communities. A religious group that was already being victimised is presently being targeted for even greater repression.
3. The analogy of an active and rumbling volcano showing signs of a cataclysmic eruption is apt. An article in Vanguard on 19 June 2022 (https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/06/attack-on-churches-35-pastors-abducted-killed-in-17-months/?fbclid=IwAR3aFYz96ofX_zCUFmbvMOVDCJy9f_VjiFS4NDXNYQHqjc3ExQmr706Cxxw) calculated that 35 Christian pastors, including priests and religious, had been abducted or killed in the last 17 months. The following are mere illustrations of what Nigerian Christians have endured the last few weeks, *over and above* the daily grind of killings, armed attacks on their farmlands, homes, villages and places of worship and education, and endless abductions.
 - On 12 May 2022, Deborah Emmanuel Samuel was stoned, beaten and burned by her college classmates at the Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto. You already know about this, having rightly issued a press statement in condemnation of the killing and the mob violence in support of that criminal act and the two individuals who had been arrested. We highlight that a video of an Islamist preacher, made before the killing, showed him urging that action be taken against anyone who blasphemed against the Prophet, and that the Imam of the Abuja Central Mosque later warned about not crossing red lines that upset Muslims. Reports indicate that the security forces in Sokoto stood by and watched as the victim was dragged by her classmates to be stoned and then set alight. They then only arrested two out of the many who were involved in the incident, and as far as we know, none from the mob that later broke into churches and set them on fire. Radicalised Muslims threatened other Christians throughout the north with death after they were also accused of blasphemy.
 - Within a week of the murder in Sokoto, religious extremists in Borno State threatened to kill a young woman, Naomi Goni, after claiming that she committed blasphemy on Facebook.
 - A peaceful protest about the murder of Deborah Emmanuel Samuel planned by the Christian Association of Nigeria for 22 May 2022 had to be confined to church premises after some Muslims threatened a provocative counter march at the same time.
 - In the early hours of 25 May 2022, armed gunmen broke into the rectory of St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Gidan Maikambo, Kafur Local Government Area of Katsina State. They kidnapped two priests and two young boys.

- On 29 May 2022, the Prelate of the Methodist Church Nigeria the Most Reverend Dr Samuel C. Kanu Uche, the Bishop of Owerri the Right Reverend Dennis Mark, and the Prelate's Chaplain the Very Reverend Jeremiah Shittu, were abducted by gunmen whilst on official duty in Abia state, south east Nigeria.
 - On Pentecost Sunday, 5 June 2022, Fulani-speaking gunmen believed to be associated with the Islamic State West Africa Province stormed the St Francis Church in Owo, Ondo State which had previously been relatively peaceful. They opened fire and detonated explosives leaving at least 40 people dead and 126 injured, and scores others terrified and traumatised.
 - Also on Pentecost Sunday, 5 June 2022, armed Fulani-speaking attackers descended on Ungwan Gamu, Dogon Noma, Ungwan Sarki and Maikori villages in the Kajuru Local Government Area on approximately 150 motorcycles, each carrying three people. Wearing turbans and armed with AK-47s, the attackers killed 32 individuals, and burned homes and the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) buildings in Dogon Noma and Maiko. This event is also notable because the villagers claimed that they were deliberately attacked by a white helicopter that also provided cover to the attackers. This is not the first time that the security forces have been accused by victims of assisting Islamists in attacking Christians but it is the first time that the accusation has been made about a helicopter firing directly on Christians who were under attack. [The state government has issued a denial.]
 - On 10 June 2022, three missionaries with the Kogi State Child Evangelism Fellowship were abducted when on an assignment at Ejule community in Ofu Local Government Area.
 - On 12 June 2022, eleven Christians were killed and many buildings were set alight when armed Fulani attacked the village of Igama, Ehaje, Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State.
 - On 13 June 2022, the Right Reverend Oluwaseun Aderogba the Anglican Bishop of Jebba in Kwara State, his wife and driver were abducted by armed gunmen while travelling from Yewa, Ogun State to Jebba, Kwara State enroute to an isolated area along the New Oyo/Ogbomoso Expressway.
 - On 19 June 2022, as we were finalising this petition, gunmen attacked worshippers at Maranatha Baptist Church and St Moses Catholic Church in Robuh, Ungwan Aku, and locals at Ungwan Fada, Ungwan Turawa and Ungwan Makama in Rubu General area of Kajuru local government in Kaduna State. St. Moses Catholic Church was attacked as the first mass was concluding. The attackers stormed the villages on motorcycles, starting from Ungwan Fada, and moved into Ungwan Turawa, before Ungwan Makama and then Rubu. In addition to killing, wounding and abducting, the attackers looted shops and carted away some valuables from the villages.
4. We appreciate that you have already started to monitor the situation in Nigeria. We thank you for the press statement that you issued on 12 May 2022 in relation to the murder in Sokoto and the resulting civil unrest. We are also heartened that you recently visited Nigeria and engaged with the authorities, and that you were able to meet with traditional leaders and some religious leaders including the Christian Association of Nigeria.
5. In preparing for this petition, we considered the UN Office for the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect's 'Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes'. Several petitioners have been able to complete individual questionnaires about the fourteen risk factors indicated therein. The completed questionnaires from the following petitioners are attached as part of our submission:
- Rev Dr Gideon Para-Mallam for the Gideon and Funmi Para-Mallam Peace Foundation

- Joel Veldkamp, PhD and Franklyne Ogbunwezeh, PhD for Christian Solidarity International (CSI)
 - Dr Kyle Abts for the International Committee on Nigeria (ICON)
 - Prof John Durodola for the Overseas Fellowship of Nigerian Christians (OFNC)
 - Baroness Cox for the Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART)
 - Dr Gloria Puldu for the Leah Foundation
 - F Visscher MSc, Observatory of Religious Freedom in Africa (ORFA)
6. The petitioners who have been able to complete the questionnaire and consider the fourteen risk factors of your Office's Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes are inclined towards the view that Nigeria is a failing state. They have become even more convinced that yet more violence and mayhem is on the horizon, and that Christians in Nigeria are facing an orchestrated campaign that threatens their survival as a religious group.
 7. All the petitioners, whether they have completed the questionnaire or not, are united in their profound concern and frustration at how the Nigerian government has been failing to protect its citizens, and in particular, has been and is wilfully neglectful about the plight of Christians.
 8. Some of us believe that the genocide has started or has happened, and others believe that it is on the horizon and fast approaching. We are however all united in our belief that whatever label is used, those of the Christian faith who have for over a decade been singled out for severe persecution, are presently facing an existential threat. We are together in our conviction that urgent measures must be taken to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe of the first order.
 9. We are therefore petitioning you, as the Special Advisor of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, to use all the facilities available through your office to prevent or stop genocide and other atrocity crimes against Christians in Nigeria, and make the following suggestions for possible activities and interventions. We make our recommendations with respect for Nigeria's rights as a sovereign State and in full awareness of its treaty obligations, its international pledges and the international community's commitment to the doctrine of the 'responsibility to protect' (R2P) to end the worst forms of violence and persecution faced by populations at risk of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

12.1 *Immediate:*

- Review and consider carefully the completed questionnaires that we have submitted, and also the documents that they refer to. Apply the 'Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes' to find entry points where immediate tailored action can be taken to prevent or stop the genocide of Christians.
- Sound the warning about genocide by bringing the situation of Nigerian Christians to the attention of the United Nations Secretary-General and through him, to the Security Council and the Human Rights Council.
- Sound the warning about genocide by bringing the situation of Nigerian Christians to the attention of the African Union Peace and Security Council, and promote concrete options such as the mobilisation of a specialised African peace-enforcement force to support the Nigerian security forces in combating Islamist militants and protecting communities from attack.
- Sound the warning internationally about the trans-Sahel spread of armed groups motivated by extremist ideology.

- Carry out a fact-finding and ‘root causes’ inquiry together with other experts (such as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extra-judicial summary or arbitrary executions, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences) about the collapse of security in Nigeria and the spread of religious extremism and intolerance, and from this to design activities and interventions for the international community and to make recommendations to the Nigerian government.
- Activate your Office’s ‘Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes’, working through local groups rather than the government.
- Work towards the appointment of a ‘United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Nigeria’, to draw attention to the seriousness of the situation and also work towards improvement.
- Engage with the Nigerian government:
 - about its responsibility to protect all communities from human rights and humanitarian law violations, and also its duty to prevent genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes;
 - about strengthening its capacity to provide basic law and order to all its citizens without discrimination;
 - about its responsibility to hold those responsible accountable, including any accessories, planners and instigators, and regardless of whether they are government officials; and
 - about the control of firearms, in particular to curb the proliferation of small arms.
- Engage with the Nigerian government and relevant States on the provision of specialised international advisors on countering the spread of Islamic extremism, de-radicalisation and promoting co-existence.
- Engage with the Nigerian government and relevant States about the provision of specialised international advisors on controlling hate speech, incitement to criminality and the abuse of social media platforms.
- Facilitate close engagement and monitoring of the situation in Nigeria by United Nations and African Union special procedures, with particular focus on ways to tackle the spread of religious extremism, incitement and disinformation through social media, and intolerance.

12.2 Longer term, and drawing from the above:

Work with the Nigerian government to:

- Provide long term assistance to strengthen its prevention, early warning and response capacity through training and technical assistance.
- Provide long term assistance in the area of de-radicalisation, combating hate speech and intolerance, and promoting peace-making among communities.
- Support a holistic approach to counter radical narratives in the twelve northern Sharia states.
- Support and fund community-focused programs of civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations aimed at targeting the socio-economic factors that contribute the spreading of extremist ideals.
- Facilitate and support reforms to educational programs and curricula aimed at providing inclusive education focused on inter-faith and inter-religious studies.

- Facilitate legislation allowing for the investigation, prosecution and punishment of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, and provide support in developing the capacity of police and justice institutions in relation thereto.
- Ensure the domestication of the Economic Community of West African States Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons into national law and ensure its full and effective implementation, and support it in establishing a system to track, collect and destroy illegal weapons; do everything in its power to disarm members of violent militant groups.
- Provide support with curbing corruption associated with the illegal manufacturing of, trafficking in, illegal possession and use of small arms and light weapons.
- Provide long term technical assistance in the security and justice sectors, including in the area of human rights in law enforcement.

10. The petitioners are ready to assist further, whether in the provision of further documents and information, or otherwise. The Reverend Dr Gideon Para-Mallam (email addresses: gorapmboy@yahoo.com & gideonpar.mall@gmail.com) is our contact person.

Dated: 21 June 2022

1. The Reverend Dr Samson Olasupo Adeniyi Ayokunle for the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)



2. The Reverend Dr Gideon Para-Mallam for the Gideon and Funmi Para-Mallam Peace Foundation



3. Dr John Eibner for Christian Solidarity International (CSI)



4. Dr Kyle Abts for the International Committee on Nigeria (ICON)



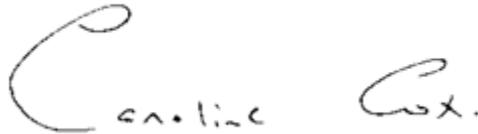
5. Professor John Akintayo for the Christian Lawyers Fellowship of Nigeria (CLASFON)



6. Professor John Durodola for the Overseas Fellowship of Nigerian Christians (OFNC)



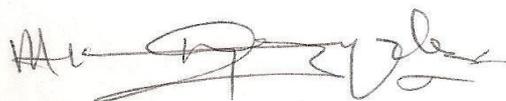
7. The Baroness Cox for the Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART)



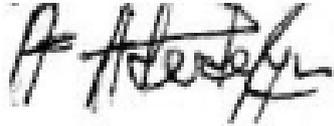
8. Dr Gloria Puldu for the Leah Foundation



9. The Reverend Akinyele Abiodun James for the Nigerian Evangelical Fellowship (NEF)



10. Pastor Ayo Adedoyin, for the International Organization for Peace and Social Justice (PSJUK)



11. Dr Ngozi Martin-Oguike for Episcopal Church Women (ECW) of St John's Parish, Sewaren, New Jersey



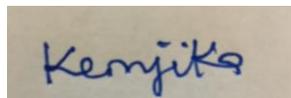
12. F Visscher MSc, Observatory of Religious Freedom in Africa (ORFA)



13. Venerable Martin Oguike, PhD St John's Episcopal Church, Sewaren, New Jersey



14. Evangelist Kenjika Iwuagwu, Church of the Good Shepherd, Rosedale, New York



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