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WASHINGTON, DC - The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) today expressed grave concern over recent attacks that occurred in the past two days in Northern Nigeria, reportedly by followers or members of Boko Haram. The most recent attack occurred today, killing at least eight worshipers attending the Apostolic Church in Yola, Adamawa State. Yesterday, over 20 people were killed and at least 15 others were wounded in the town of Mubi, Adamawa State. The dead and wounded in yesterday's attacks are from the Igbo tribe who were conducting a meeting.

"USCIRF strongly condemns the recurring attacks against Christians and Southerners in Northern Nigeria, reportedly by members of the Boko Haram sect. Nigeria's security forces must act decisively, but responsibly, to restore calm," said Leonard Leo, USCIRF chair.

Igbo people typically are from the South East part of Nigeria. Igbo people living in Northern Nigeria would be predominantly Christian and are known to be shop owners and traders throughout the predominantly Muslim North. Eyewitnesses recount that the attackers sprayed bullets into the meeting place and shouted "God is Great."

The attacks mark a harrowing fulfillment of a warning issued just days ago, reportedly made by a person claiming to be a Boko Haram representative that all Christians and Southerners needed to leave Northern Nigeria immediately or face attack.

These attacks follow on the heels of the bombings of several churches on Christmas Day, in which over 40 were killed, and an apparent reprisal attack when a homemade bomb was thrown into a classroom in an Islamic school in Sapele, Nigeria killing at least six children and one teacher. To date, the Nigerian government has failed to address the culture of impunity surrounding the ongoing violence. Consequently, for the past two years USCIRF has recommended that Nigeria be officially designated a "country of particular concern" Under the International Religious Freedom Act for tolerating particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

“The United States must vigorously press the Nigerians to address the violence through law enforcement and prosecutions, such as during meetings of the U.S.-Nigeria Bi-National Commission,” said Leo.

USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission. USCIRF Commissioners are appointed by the President and the leadership of both political parties in the Senate and the House of Representatives. USCIRF’s principal responsibilities are to review the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom internationally and to make policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and Congress.

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