

Recommendations for U.S. Policy

I. CPC Designation and Next Steps

The U.S. government should:

- designate the government of Nigeria as a “country of particular concern,” or CPC, under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA), for tolerating particularly severe violations of religious freedom;
- enter into a binding agreement with the Nigerian government, as defined in section 405(c) of the International Religious Freedom Act, that obligates the government to cease or take substantial steps to address policies leading to violations of religious freedom, or take an appropriate commensurate action;
- ensure that the following benchmarks are part of any such binding agreement with the Nigerian government, including, but not limited to:

--vigorously investigating and prosecuting perpetrators of sectarian and communal violence, including the November 2008 Jos incident, but also other past instances where communal and sectarian violence has taken place;

--developing effective conflict prevention and early warning system mechanisms at the local, state, and federal levels using practical and implementable criteria;

--developing the capability to rapidly deploy specialized police and army units to prevent and combat sectarian violence in cities around the country where there has been a history of sectarian violence in central and northern Nigeria, including Jos, Kaduna, Kano, and Bauchi states, among others;

--taking steps to professionalize its police and military forces in its investigative, community policing, crowd control, and conflict prevention capacities; and

--conducting specialized training for its military and security forces to be more adequately trained in human rights standards, as well as non-lethal responses to crowd control and in quelling mob or communal violence;

- urge the Nigerian government to carry out its responsibility to prevent and contain acts of sectarian and communal violence, prevent reprisal attacks, and bring those responsible for such violence to justice;
- urge the Nigerian House of Representatives and Senate to conduct more rigorous oversight of executive branch agencies, including the Ministry of Justice, responsible for preventing sectarian violence, prosecuting perpetrators of sectarian violence, and responding to the various crises; and
- call on the UN Human Rights Council to monitor carefully and demand Nigeria’s compliance with the recommendations of the representatives of those UN special procedures that have already visited Nigeria, particularly the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief (2005) and the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions (2005).

II. Expanding U.S. Support for Communal Conflict Prevention and Mitigation

The U.S. government should offer technical and programmatic assistance by:

- increasing funding, training, and assistance to the Nigerian federal police force through the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs;
- increasing funds for the expansion of specialized training for Nigerian military and federal and state police forces to be more adequately trained in non-lethal responses to crowd control and in quelling mob or sectarian violence, as well as to

increase their investigative, community policing, crowd control, and conflict prevention capacities;

- engaging existing social institutions, including indigenous religious bodies, and strengthening civil society organizations that have special expertise and a demonstrated commitment in the areas of inter-religious and inter-ethnic reconciliation and conflict prevention, to promote a peaceful civil society;
- supporting the expansion of NIREC, formed to promote dialogue between Christians and Muslims, and replicate NIREC at the state and local levels;
- working with Nigerian NGOs engaging on communal conflict prevention and mitigation, emphasizing capacity-building at the local level;
- assisting human rights defenders, including legal aid groups that defend the constitutional and internationally recognized rights of individuals, especially women, who are impacted by sharia-based criminal codes;
- assisting human rights defenders responding to credible allegations of religious discrimination in any part of Nigeria; and
- creating programs and institutions, particularly in areas where communal violence has occurred, that promote objective, unbiased, and non-inflammatory reporting, consistent with the right to freedom of expression.

III. Urging the Nigerian Government to Oppose Religious Extremism

The U.S. government should urge the government of Nigeria to:

- ensure that sharia codes, as applied, uphold the principle of equality under the law between men and women and between Muslims and non-Muslims, and do not result in violations of international human rights standards with regard

to freedom of religion or belief, due process of law, equal treatment before the law, freedom of expression, and discriminatory practices against women;

- ensure that sharia criminal codes do not apply to non-Muslims or to individual Muslims who do not wish to go before sharia courts, and prevent law enforcement activities in northern states by any quasi-official or private corps of sharia enforcers; and
- cease any official, state-level support for the *Hisbah*, or religious police, by dissolving the *Hisbah* and entrusting law enforcement to professionals in law enforcement agencies with a precise jurisdiction and subject to judicial review.

IV. Expanding U.S. Presence and Outreach Efforts, Primarily in Northern Nigeria

The U.S. government should:

- open a consulate or other official presence in Kano or elsewhere in the north;
- provide Embassy and Consulate staff with appropriate local language skills, and requiring political and public affairs officers to regularly travel throughout Nigeria;
- increase the capacity of the Hausa Service of the Voice of America to report fair and balanced views on communal conflict and human rights issues;
- sponsor several exchange programs each year on the topics of freedom of religion or belief, religious tolerance, and Islamic law and human rights that target religious leaders, human rights advocates, government officials, and northern Nigerians; and
- continue to support and adequately fund the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative, a regional U.S. security partnership, succeeding the previous Pan-Sahel Initiative and comprised

of African and Maghreb countries, including Nigeria, which helps to identify, publicize, and counter foreign sources of terrorism and religious extremism.