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U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Nigeria**International Religious Freedom Report 2002**

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The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, including freedom to change one's religion or belief, and freedom to manifest and propagate one's religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice, and observance, and while the Federal Government generally respects religious freedom, there were some instances in which limits were placed on religious activity in order to address security and public safety concerns. Some state governments restricted these rights in practice in certain respects. The Federal Government has instituted a committee charged with drafting uniform Shari'a criminal and procedural laws that could be adopted by all states.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

Interreligious tension between Christians and Muslims remained high, and there were several violent ethno-religious conflicts during the period covered by this report, including in September 2001 in Plateau State, which resulted in the deaths of more than 2,300 persons. There was some societal discrimination against religious minorities.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has a total land area of 356,700 square miles, and its population is estimated to be 120 million; however, there has not been an accurate census for more than 30 years, and many observers believe that the country's population exceeds this figure. Approximately half of the country's population practice Islam, approximately 40 percent practice Christianity, and approximately 10 percent practice exclusively traditional indigenous religions or no religion. Many persons practice elements of Christianity or Islam and elements of a traditional indigenous religion. The predominant form of Islam in the country is Sunni. The Christian population includes Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and a growing number of Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians. Catholics constitute the largest Christian denomination.

There is a strong correlation between religious differences and ethnic and regional diversity. The north, which is dominated by the large Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups, predominantly is Muslim; however, there are significant numbers of Christians in the middle belt states and in urban centers of the north. Both Muslims and Christians are found in large numbers in the Middle Belt. In the southwest, where the large Yoruba ethnic group is the majority, there is no dominant religion. Most Yorubas practice either Islam or Christianity, while others continue to practice the traditional Yoruba religion, which includes a belief in a supreme deity and the worship of lesser deities that serve as agents of the supreme deity in aspects of daily life. In the east, where the large Igbo ethnic group is dominant, Catholics and Methodists are the majority, although many Igbos continue to observe traditional rites and ceremonies.

Foreign missionaries operate in the country and include Jesuits, Dominicans, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), the Church of Christ, and the Society for International Missions. Rough estimates put the number of foreign missionaries at more than 1,000, with many in the area around Jos, in Plateau State. Many have resided in the country for a decade or longer. There reportedly are fewer foreign Muslim missionaries, and they stay in the country for shorter periods of time than their Christian counterparts. Muslim organizations often focus on training citizens in traditional centers of Islamic education abroad and then returning them to the country.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom*Legal/Policy Framework*

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, including freedom to change one's religion or belief, and freedom to manifest and propagate one's religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice, and observance, and while the Federal Government generally respects religious freedom, there were some instances in which limits were placed on religious activity in order to address security and public safety concerns. Some state governments restricted these rights in practice in certain respects.

The Constitution prohibits state and local governments from adopting an official religion; however, some Christians have alleged that Islam has been adopted as the de facto state religion of several northern states, citing the reintroduction of Shari'a criminal law and the continued use of state resources to fund the construction of mosques, the teaching of Alkalīs (Muslim judges), and pilgrimages to Mecca (Hajj). However, state funds also are used to fund Christian pilgrimages to Jerusalem. In general states with a clear Christian or Muslim majority overtly favor the majority faith. There are 36 states in the country; governors have substantial autonomy in decision-making but derive the vast majority of their resources from the Federal Government. Both the Federal and state governments are involved in religious matters, including the regulation of mandatory religious instruction in public schools, subsidized construction of churches and mosques, state-sponsored participation in the Hajj, and pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

The Constitution provides that states may elect to use Islamic (Shari'a) customary law and courts. Until the reintroduction of criminal Shari'a by Zamfara State in 2000, the jurisdiction of Shari'a courts, which are part of the regular court system, had been limited to family or personal law cases involving Muslims, or to civil disputes between Muslims who consent to the courts' jurisdiction. However, the Constitution states that a Shari'a court of appeal may exercise "such other jurisdiction as may be conferred upon it by the law of the State." Some states have interpreted this language as granting them the right to expand the jurisdiction of existing Shari'a courts to include criminal matters. In 1999 the governor of Zamfara State, Ahmed Sani, signed a bill that established Shari'a courts and courts of appeal in Zamfara State, and another bill that constituted the Shari'a penal code; the bills took effect in 2000. Zamfara's law adopted traditional Shari'a in its entirety, with the exception that apostasy was not criminalized. Other Muslim communities, particularly from Kano, Niger, Sokoto, Jigawa, Borno, Yobe, Kaduna, and Katsina states, began to echo the call for Shari'a in their states. By the end of the period covered by this report, 12 northern states had adopted variations of Shari'a law—Zamfara, Sokoto, Kebbi, Niger, Kano, Katsina, Kaduna, Jigawa, Yobe, Bauchi, Borno, and Gombe. According to media reports, elements of the large Muslim minority of Oyo State have called for the implementation of elements of civil Shari'a; however, the Government has not responded. Adherence to the new Shari'a provisions is compulsory for Muslims in some states and optional in others. On November 2, 2001, Kaduna State implemented a modified version of Shari'a law. According to state Governor Ahmed Makarfi, Islamic punishments will not be incorporated into the criminal code in Kaduna, as has happened in several other northern states.

The Constitution also provides that the Federal Government is to establish a Federal Shari'a Court of Appeal and Final Court of Appeal; however, the Government had not yet established such courts by the end of the period covered by this report. Federal appeals dealing with Islamic law were heard by appellant jurists trained in Islamic law.

In 1999 President Obasanjo expressed the view that the expanded Shari'a provisions were unconstitutional; however, the Federal Government did not intervene legally to annul the provisions. The Federal Government tacitly has acknowledged the ability of states to implement criminal Shari'a. However, the Federal Government has instituted a committee charged with the responsibility to draft uniform Shari'a criminal and procedural laws that could be adopted by all states. In March 2002, Justice Minister Kanu Agabi made public a letter to northern governors in which he stated that sentences given under Shari'a law should not be harsher than those imposed by general secular law; however, no action resulted from this letter. Defendants have the right to challenge the constitutionality of Shari'a criminal statutes through the courts; however, no challenges with adequate legal standing had made their way through the appellate system by the end of the period covered by this report.

Although many non-Muslims had feared that the implementation of Shari'a would change their way of life, there has been little or no change in the daily lives of most non-Muslims. While some state and local governments have interpreted the new Shari'a laws stringently, the majority have interpreted their laws differently and implemented them with moderation. There also is a trend developing among some sections of the Muslim community to shift focus from the criminal law aspects of Shari'a law to its tenets of social justice and charity for the poor. Islamic scholars and many Muslim lawyers began educating the poor and the less well informed about their procedural rights under Shari'a. Several lawyers offer free services to the indigent in cases with potentially severe punishments.

Christian and Islamic groups planning to build new churches or mosques are required to register with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). The law requires that such groups name a board of trustees, place a notice of the group's intent to organize in three nationwide newspapers, and send trustee information to the CAC. If no objections are received, the group can proceed with its meetings. This law was put into effect to stem the proliferation of new buildings in the absence of zoning laws, to resolve legal questions arising from disputes over church ownership and control, to provide a single registry for government reference in the event that compensation is demanded following civil disturbances, and to allow for legal solemnization of marriages. The CAC did not deny registration to any religious group during the period covered by this report; however, some religious groups experienced delays in obtaining permission from local zoning boards to build houses of worship. Many nascent churches and Islamic congregations ignore the registration requirement, and a small number have had their places of worship shut down because of enforcement of zoning laws. Some persons claimed that enforcement of these laws was selective.

The Government remained a member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) during the period covered by this report and continued to send representatives to the annual meeting in Cairo despite concerns of Christian citizens that this action undermined the concept of a secular state.

Each year the Government declares the following Islamic and Christian festival days as national holidays: Eid-el-Asha, Eid-el-fitr, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Eid-el-maulud, Christmas Day, and

Boxing Day.

Some state governors actively have encouraged interfaith and interethnic discussions and have taken steps to prevent further violence and tension. The Government encourages the activities of nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) such as the Kaduna-based Inter-Faith Mediation Center and the Muslim/Christian Dialog Forum.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Throughout the year, the Government nominally required organizers of outdoor public functions to apply for permits, although both government authorities and those assembling often ignored this requirement. The Government retained legal authority to ban gatherings whose political, ethnic, or religious content might lead to unrest. In 2000 several northern state governments banned open air preaching and public religious processions. In September 2001, the Kaduna state government extended a ban on all forms of processions, rallies, demonstrations, and meetings in public places. Such bans were viewed as necessary public safety measures after approximately 2,000 people died in Shari'a related violence nationwide in 2000. In October 2001, a security forces committee banned all political, cultural, and religious meetings in Plateau State following ethno-religious violence in Jos, the state capital (see Section III). On October 31, 2001, the Ondo state government banned open-air religious meetings by both Christians and Muslims in a bid to prevent religious violence. None of these bans had been lifted formally by the end of the period covered by this report; however, state governments granted some permits on a case-by-case basis. In the southern part of the country, large outdoor religious gatherings continued to be common. Unlike in the period covered by the previous report, no curfews were in effect.

Following nationwide Shari'a-related violence in 2000, many northern states banned public proselytizing, although it is permitted by the Constitution. The Katsina and Plateau state governments enacted and maintained a ban on public proselytizing for security reasons during the period covered by this report; however, some groups have been allowed to carry out activities despite the formal bans, which were enforced on a case-by-case basis. Some states allowed some public proselytizing by Christians and Muslims. Missionaries reported that law enforcement officials harassed them when they proselytized outside of their designated zones. Both Christian and Muslim organizations alleged that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Immigration Department restricted the entry into the country of certain religious practitioners, particularly persons suspected of intending to proselytize. Proselytizing did not appear to be restricted in the southern part of the country. Many missionary groups also have noted bureaucratic delays and obstruction and attempts to extort money for the processing of necessary residence permits for foreigners; however, many foreign businesses and other nonreligious organizations also have encountered similar difficulties.

Although the expanded Shari'a laws technically do not apply to non-Muslims, the non-Muslim minority, especially in Zamfara State, has been subjected to certain social provisions of the laws, such as the separation of the sexes in health facilities; bans on the sale of alcohol and alcohol consumption; and decisions by some entrepreneurs not to engage in certain activities out of concern for Shari'a restrictions. Niger State also has enforced a ban on the selling of alcohol. Consumption of alcohol by non-Muslims has not been criminalized; however, its sale and public consumption have been restricted throughout most of the north, except on Federal Government installations such as military and police barracks. In Zamfara State, a law to segregate sexes in public transportation was repealed after 2 weeks; however, segregation still occurred in some cases. Christian associations have arranged for private transportation services for Christian women so that they are not forced to wait for female only transportation provided by the Zamfara State government. Sokoto State's transportation system is run completely by private operators, and Sokoto state governor Dalhatu Bafarawa said that the state cannot compel private operators to carry female passengers if doing so violates their religious convictions. The Governor of Zamfara disbursed public funds to refurbish mosques, and also pronounced that only persons with beards would win government contracts; however, contracts were awarded to persons without beards. There is a long tradition of separating schoolchildren by gender in the north; this practice was codified in Kebbi and Sokoto states in 2000. Although some form of segregation by gender occurred in many secondary schools in the North, it was enforced locally, rather than on a state-wide basis.

In Zamfara State, laws proposed during the period covered by this report included a dress code for women that bans short skirts and trousers, the mandatory closing of shops on Fridays, and a ban of video rental clubs. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) branch in Zamfara State has protested these new laws to the Zamfara state government. Reportedly they were told that the first law was proposed on public decency grounds, and that the second law only would apply to Muslim businesses. The laws were not enacted by the end of the period covered by this report.

All Muslims in states that expanded Shari'a to criminal matters are subject to the new Shari'a criminal codes. In Zamfara State, all cases involving Muslims must be heard by a Shari'a court. Other states with Shari'a law still permit Muslims to choose common law courts for criminal cases; however, societal pressure forces most Muslims to use the Shari'a court system. In apparent violation of traditional Shari'a jurisprudence, some Alkalis judges denied the same level of Shari'a criminal protection to women that they provide to men.

There are no legal provisions barring women or other groups from testifying in civil court or giving their testimony less weight; however, the testimony of women and non-Muslims usually is accorded less weight in Shari'a courts. For example, if one woman testifies, a second woman also must provide testimony to equal the weight of the testimony of one man.

The law prohibits religious discrimination; however, government officials sometimes discriminated against persons practicing a religion different from their own, notably in hiring practices and in the awarding of state contracts.

Christians in the predominantly Muslim northern states alleged that local government officials used zoning regulations to stop or slow the establishment of new Christian churches. Officials have responded that many of these new churches are being formed in traditionally residential neighborhoods that were not zoned for religious purposes. CAN offices in Zamfara and Sokoto states alleged that local authorities there delayed or denied to Christians certificates of occupancy (CO's), which are required to show title to land. For example, the Catholic Church in Zamfara State has been unable to retake possession of a clinic that was confiscated during a period of military rule in the 1970's. Renewal of the CO for the church building was approved; however, the Church has been unable to obtain a CO to reoccupy the clinic building and the adjoining land. Zamfara and Sokoto state officials denied that discrimination was behind the cases cited by CAN. State officials said the certification boards were dealing with a large backlog of cases for all persons, regardless of religious faith. Muslims have complained that they were denied permission to build mosques in the predominantly Christian southern states of Abia and Akwa Ibom.

Although religious belief or adherence is not required for membership in registered political parties, in May 2001, the Zamfara state house assembly suspended for 3 months two of its Muslim members--Ibrahim Musa Murai and Abdullahi Majidadi Kurya--for not supporting bills introduced by the governor; they were reinstated during the period covered by this report.

Although distribution of religious publications remained generally unrestricted, the Government continued to enforce lightly a ban on published religious advertisements. There were reports by Christians in Zamfara State that the state government restricted the distribution of religious (Christian) literature. In 2000 Bishop Samson Bala of Gusau Diocese said that the state radio station had closed its doors to Christians. According to Bishop Bala, commercials and paid advertisements containing Christian content were not accepted, and only Islamic religious programs were aired. Similar discrimination against the use of state-owned media for Muslim programming was reported in the south.

The Federal Government continued to enforce a ban on religious organizations on campuses of primary schools, although individual students retain the right to practice their religions in recognized places of worship. According to the Constitution, students are not required to receive instruction relating to a religion other than their own; however, public school students throughout the country were required to undergo either Islamic or Christian religious instruction. Islamic studies are mandatory in public schools in Zamfara and other northern states, often to the exclusion of Christianity. State authorities claim that students are permitted to decline to attend these classes or to request a teacher of their own religion to provide alternative instruction. For example, there are no teachers of "Christian Religious Knowledge" in many northern schools. There are reports that Christianity is taught in the same manner in Enugu and Edo states, and that Muslim students cannot access "Islamic Religious Knowledge" in the public schools. CAN leaders volunteered to place teachers of Christianity in Zamfara and Sokoto state schools, where students alleged that they were being forced to take courses in Islamic religious knowledge in order to graduate. Governors of both states accepted the offer of assistance and stated that they had not been aware of the problem; however, CAN did not provide any teachers in either state during the period covered by this report, stating that they lacked funding.

In 2000 more than 1,500 Muslim students from the University of Ibadan and Ibadan public schools gathered at Oyo state government offices to protest the failure of public schools to offer Islamic studies courses alongside Christian courses; Islamic courses still were unavailable at the end of the period covered by this report.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

The extension of Shari'a law in many northern states generated a public debate on whether Shari'a punishments such as amputation for theft, stoning for adultery, and caning for fornication and public drunkenness constituted "torture or ... inhuman or degrading treatment" as stipulated in the Constitution.

Several Shari'a courts sentenced persons to death. In January 2002, a Katsina man was hanged in Kaduna State after he was convicted in a Shari'a court of stabbing a woman and her two children to death while robbing her home. The Constitution permits capital punishment; however, this was the first execution since the country's return to democracy in 1999.

Although Shari'a courts sentenced other persons to death, no other sentences were implemented during the period covered by this report. For example, in September 2001, an Islamic court in Kebbi State sentenced a man to be stoned to death for sodomizing a 7-year-old boy. The sentence had not been carried out by the end of the period covered by this report.

On October 19, 2001, a local Shari'a court in Sokoto State convicted and sentenced to death by stoning Safiya Hussaini for adultery because it found her pregnancy to be proof of adultery; she was not married at the time of the pregnancy.

Hussaini appealed the sentence by arguing numerous separate grounds for her acquittal, including the Koran, the Hadiths, the Constitution, the Sokoto state Shari'a Penal Code, and the Shari'a Procedure Code. In March 2002, the Sokoto state Shari'a Court of Appeal overturned the conviction, citing several

fundamental flaws in the original court's findings, including that the alleged crime must have been committed prior to the implementation of criminal Shari'a in Sokoto State.

In late March 2002, in Katsina State, Amina Lawal was sentenced to death by stoning after confessing to having a child while divorced. The court allowed Lawal to return to her own village at least until January 2004. The appeals court was scheduled to begin hearing her appeal in July 2002.

Four other women were convicted of adultery under Shari'a law; two were released on bail, while two others were sentenced to pay a fine.

According to media reports, in June 2002, a Shari'a court in Bauchi State convicted of adultery and sentenced to death by stoning Yunusa Rafin Chiyawa. He was the first man to be convicted of adultery under Shari'a law. Aisha Haruna, the woman he allegedly had an affair with, was acquitted. It was unclear whether the defendant would appeal his conviction or whether the State government can intervene to file an appeal in the case.

Some northern states have administered amputations and canings pursuant to expanded Shari'a law. For example, on July 6, 2001, Umaru Aliyu had his hand amputated in Sokoto State after being convicted of stealing a goat and approximately \$400. In July 2001, a Shari'a court in Kebbi State sentenced a 15-year-old boy to amputation of one of his hands for stealing \$286 (32,000 naira) from a business man. In September 2000, a Sokoto Shari'a court handed down a sentence of amputation for a thief; the sentence had not been carried out by the end of the period covered by this report.

During the period covered by this report, seven men, who were convicted of stealing and housebreaking, were sentenced to have their right hands amputated in Kano State. Two of the men had appeals pending, and the other five had not exercised their right to appeal. In Bauchi State, four men who were convicted of stealing were sentenced to have their right hands amputated. Bauchi State Governor Adamu Mu'azu referred these cases to the Inspectorate Division of Shari'a Courts for review. Once the review is complete, it is the governor's decision whether or not the sentences are carried out. No further action was taken by the end of the period covered by this report.

Other convicted Muslim criminals in Shari'a law states were subjected to public caning for various minor offenses, such as petty theft, public consumption of alcohol, and engaging in prostitution. For example, in January 2002, a Shari'a judge was flogged publicly after he was convicted of consuming alcohol. Indigent persons without legal representation were more likely to have their sentences carried out immediately upon being sentenced.

In January 2001, Zamfara state officials caned 14-year-old Bariya Magazu for fornication because she bore a child out of wedlock. Magazu reportedly was forced by her father to provide sexual favors to three men to whom he owed debts. Instead of prosecuting the three men for statutory rape, the court required Magazu to produce four witnesses to corroborate her testimony. Because she could not produce four witnesses, the Shari'a court handed down a sentence of 100 lashes for fornication and 80 additional lashes for bearing false testimony. Magazu appealed and the sentence temporarily was suspended; however, the judge eventually imposed a reduced sentence of 100 lashes. Magazu continued her appeal contesting the propriety of her conviction under Islamic law. Magazu's appeal was pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

Unlike in the period covered by the previous report, there were no reports that Shari'a courts tried non-Muslims.

Authorities arrested and detained several religious leaders during the period covered by this report. In August 2001, security agents arrested and detained for 27 days without charge Sheik Yakubu Musa, a Katsina-based Islamic scholar; the Abuja High Court later ordered his release.

On March 2, 2002, State Security Service (SSS) detained and interrogated for 16 hours Pastor Tunde Bakare after he returned to the country from Ghana; he was released without charge. Bakare allegedly prophesied the fall of the Obasanjo government and left the country to avoid the anticipated chaos. Media reports claiming that his passport was confiscated could not be verified.

On March 7, 2002, in Enugu State, police raided the site of a weekly crusade led by charismatic Catholic priest Father Ejike Mbaka and allegedly released a gas, causing a stampede; at least 14 persons were killed and several others were seriously injured. The police later detained Enugu Vicar General Reverend Obiora Ike, allegedly for criticizing the incident. The state government reportedly had warned Father Mbaka to stop publicly criticizing it.

On September 23, 2002, six Pakistani Muslim scholars were arrested and detained without charge in Benue State on suspicion of immigration violations. On November 16, in Sagamu, Ogun State, police arrested the same six Pakistani nationals for alleged incitement of a religious crisis; on November 18, the Immigration Services deported them.

There were media reports that in April 2002, two men were accused of converting from Islam to Christianity. Prosecutors sought the death penalty; however, the judge found that the Zamfara State Shari'a code did not criminalize explicitly apostasy, and therefore he had no legal basis to decide the case. He also gave the men 3 days to reconsider their decision to convert to Christianity and for the

Zamfara Government to respond. The men are accused of joining the Great Commission movement, an evangelical church; however, the men claim that they never were Muslims but were Magazawa, a Hausa subgroup that long has practiced Christianity.

A number of state sanctioned private vigilante Shari'a enforcement groups have formed in states with expanded Shari'a law. In Zamfara State, Governor Ahmed Sani vested the local vigilante group with full powers of arrest and prosecution because he believed that the police were not enforcing the new Shari'a laws. Governor Saminu Turaki of Jigawa State also mobilized a statewide Shari'a enforcement committee to arrest, detain, and prosecute Muslim offenders. These groups still exist; however, their activities decreased during the period covered by this report.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Section III. Societal Attitudes

Religious differences often correspond to regional and ethnic differences. For example, the north, including part of the Middle Belt, overwhelmingly are Muslim, and the large Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups tend to dominate these areas. Many southern ethnic groups predominantly are Christian. In many areas of the Middle Belt, Muslim Fulani tend to be pastoralists, while the Muslim Hausa and most Christian ethnic groups tend more toward farming or urban living. Consequently it often is difficult to distinguish religious discrimination and tension from ethnic, regional, economic, and land use competition. Religious tensions underscored what predominantly were ethnic confrontations during the period covered by this report. It is not unusual for two different ethnic groups with a long history of conflict to adopt different religions, which adds a religious aspect to tensions that originally were ethnic.

Following the 2000 violence in Kaduna, the Government sponsored dialog among Kaduna's different religious and ethnic groups, which may have contributed to fewer incidents of ethno-religious violence in the state during the beginning of the period covered by this report. For example, in October 2001, when two small churches caught fire in Kaduna city, Christian and Muslim neighbors helped extinguish the fires, and the state government promised funds to repair them. However, there were significant ethno-religious clashes in Delta, Anambra, Bauchi, Plateau, Nassarawa, Rivers, Benue, Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, and Ebonyi states during the period covered by this report. Numerous persons were killed, injured, or displaced as a result of ethno-religious violence.

The most significant incident occurred between September 7 and 13, 2001, when 2,300 persons were killed in ethno-religious violence in Jos. It is unclear how the unrest began; however, the appointment of an ethnic Hausa to the chairmanship of a local Poverty Alleviation Program had increased tensions and accompanied earlier violence between Christian Sayewa and Muslim Hausa in Tafawa Balewa, Bauchi, only 37 miles away. There also were reports of summary executions of Hausa in outlying villages. Approximately 80 percent of the victims in Jos were Hausa Muslims, who constitute a significant minority in Jos. The military was able to restore order; however, thousands of Hausas fled Plateau State for Kaduna, Kano, Jigawa, and Bauchi. This conflict appears to have been primarily ethnic and secondarily religious. Christians of different groups were reported to have attacked each other, and Yoruba Muslims reportedly attacked Hausa Muslims. According to the Nigerian Red Cross, approximately 11,600 persons were displaced internally. Although the crisis in Jos had religious overtones, it was precipitated, at least partially, by indigenous ethnic groups attempting deny Hausa "immigrants" access to the resources of Plateau State, even though immigrant Hausa settlers originally founded Jos.

On October 12, 2001, 600 to 1,000 Muslims peacefully demonstrated in Kano against U.S. and allied air strikes against Afghanistan. Several hours after the conclusion of the demonstration, rioting broke out in the largest marketplace in the city of Kano. While sparked initially by street thugs, the violence later took on religious and ethnic overtones. A number of churches and three mosques reportedly were burned during the fighting. The following morning, a mob of predominantly Hausa youths attacked shopkeepers and looted shops in the city's major market. During the riots, 100 persons were killed. The army was called out to restore order. Some citizens alleged that the army and police used excessive and lethal force and that several deaths came at the hands of the security forces. Many Igbo and Yoruba residents sent their families south following the violence. In November 2001, police reportedly arrested and charged more than 200 persons in connection with the violence; according to the head of the police in Kano State, 150 persons were taken to court. After order was restored, Governor Kwankwaso held a series of meetings with local ethnic and religious leaders to stem further outbreaks and to rebuild trust between the communities.

On November 3 and 4, 2001, in Gwantu, Kaduna State, at least 10 persons reportedly were killed during fighting, which resulted from a long-standing dispute between rival local leaders that degenerated into violence due to the introduction of a modified form of criminal Shari'a law.

In February 2002, Yoruba youth clashed with Hausa residents in the Idi-Araba area of Lagos. The incident was caused by interethnic tensions but had some religious overtones.

There also were several incidents in which Muslim youths vandalized Christian churches. In June 2001, there were unconfirmed reports that Muslim youths set four churches on fire in Dutse, Jigawa State. In November 2001, Muslim youths reportedly vandalized eight churches in Osogbo, Osun State, and four churches in Ilorin, Kwara State; one person reportedly was killed in Osogbo.

In addition there were reports that in June 2002, extremist Islamic militants killed, injured, and displaced Christians in Jos, Berakin Ladi, Vom, and Miango. There also were reports that several churches were burned, shops and homes looted, and Christian property destroyed in Yelwa Shendam. One of the disputes appeared to have begun after a Muslim man proposed marriage to a Christian woman. The woman's brother beat her, and when her fiancé intervened, a fight broke out. What began as a family dispute quickly spread to other parts of the community and took on ethno-religious overtones because of existing tensions between Christians and Muslims in the area.

In September 2000, Gombe State governor Abubakar Hashidu set up a judicial commission of inquiry to investigate the causes of the religious violence that took place in Bambam in 2000. The 17-member committee includes both Christians and Muslims. The commission had not published its results by the end of the period covered by this report.

The law prohibits religious discrimination; however, private businesses frequently are guilty of informal religious and ethnic discrimination in their hiring practices and purchasing patterns. In nearly all states, ethnic rivalries between majority groups and minority "immigrants" lead to some societal discrimination against minority ethnic and religious groups.

Purdah, the Islamic practice of keeping girls and women in seclusion from men outside the family, continued among some families in some parts of the north.

In many parts of the country, girls are discriminated against in their access to education for social and economic reasons; religious beliefs sometimes are a factor. Girls living in the more traditional rural areas, both in the predominantly Muslim north and the predominantly Christian south, are disadvantaged even more than their urban counterparts. In the north, Muslim communities favor boys over girls in deciding which children to enroll in secondary and elementary schools.

Vigilante groups were formed to enforce the new Shari'a laws, and in some cases, punish offenders. Some of these vigilante groups were state-sanctioned. These groups still exist; however, their activities decreased during the period covered by this report.

In Kano State, an unofficial vigilante group known as Hisbah began taking action against both Muslims and Christians who violate the new Shari'a laws. There were no reports of Hisbah actions against Muslims or Christians during the period covered by this report.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

U.S. Embassy officials regularly discussed religious freedom issues with various federal, state, and local officials, and also prominent citizens. Embassy officials raised religious freedom issues with government officials in the context of the U.S. Government's overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. The U.S. Government, through the U.S. Embassy and in statements from officials in Washington, sought to encourage a peaceful resolution to the Shari'a issue and urged that human rights and religious freedom be respected in any resolution. The Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) created programs for conflict resolution training that the U.S. Agency for International Development continues to implement. The following programs target Muslim communities: The International Visitor Program, the American Speaker Program, the Fulbright Senior Scholar Program, the Humphrey Fellowship Program, and programs organized by the Office of Citizen Exchanges. The American Speaker Program particularly has been effective in promoting dialog and informing local audiences about religious freedom in the U.S. The Embassy also began publishing its informational magazine in Hausa, the language of the predominantly Muslim north.

In December 2001, the Ambassador hosted a very successful Iftar dinner, which generated goodwill with leading Muslims. In February 2002, the Embassy's Public Affairs Section sponsored the visit of the Executive Director of the American Muslim Council, Aly Abuzaakouk, to discuss antiterrorism efforts, religious tolerance, and the religious freedom of Muslims in the United States. Abuzaakouk addressed more than 500 Muslims and Christians in Abuja, Ibadan, Jos, Lagos, Kaduna, and Kano states.

The Embassy also sponsored several visits to promote HIV/AIDS awareness. Former President Jimmy Carter, accompanied by Bill Gates Sr., of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, addressed the Presidential Chapel at the Sunday service, where he preached a message of abstinence and faithfulness as a way to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS. In June 2002, Reverend Eugene Rivers of the Ten Point Coalition addressed Muslims and Christians in Kaduna and Lagos and challenged them to overcome their differences, in order to cooperate in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

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