

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	190
Land:	Nigeria
Kilde:	United States Commission on International Religious Freedom
Titel:	Countries of Particular Concern: Nigeria
Udgivet:	29. april 2010
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	16. september 2010

Title	USCIRF Annual Report 2010 - Countries of Particular Concern: Nigeria
Publisher	United States Commission on International Religious Freedom
Country	Nigeria
Publication Date	29 April 2010
Cite as	United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, <i>USCIRF Annual Report 2010 - Countries of Particular Concern: Nigeria</i> , 29 April 2010, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4be2840c6.html [accessed 10 September 2010]

USCIRF Annual Report 2010 - Countries of Particular Concern: Nigeria

FINDINGS: The government of Nigeria continues to respond inadequately and ineffectively to recurrent communal and sectarian violence. Religion is a driving force in the violence, as a precipitating factor or proxy for political or social issues. Years of inaction by Nigeria's federal, state and local governments has created a climate of impunity, resulting in thousands of deaths. Other religious freedom concerns in Nigeria include the expansion of sharia (Islamic law) into the criminal codes of several northern Nigerian states and discrimination against minority communities of Christians and Muslims.

Based on these concerns, USCIRF recommends in 2010, for the second year, that Nigeria be designated as a "country of particular concern," or CPC. Prior to the 2009 CPC recommendation, Nigeria had been on USCIRF's Watch List since 2002.

Since 1999, a disturbingly large number of Nigerians – 12,000, if not more – have been killed in attacks and reprisals between Muslims and Christians. This trend continues: in the past year, two major outbreaks of sectarian violence took place since January 2010 in and around the city of Jos, Plateau State that resulted in as many as 1,000 people being killed. In addition, religiously-motivated violence by an extremist Islamic sect resulted in 900 – 2,000 deaths in several northern states in July 2009. The Jos violence was the most recent in a long line of violent incidents resulting in death and destruction, and instilling a sense of fear within Northern and Central Nigerian communities. The government of Nigeria has done little, if anything, to address sectarian and communal violence, making no serious effort to investigate or prosecute the perpetrators of the numerous killings and other crimes. Government leaders have failed to heed warning signs of violence, and the federal police have failed to respond effectively and appropriately – or even at all – when violence has erupted. The national legislature has exercised no discernible oversight over either the Ministry of Justice or the National Human Rights Commission to ensure adequate investigation and resolution of religious violence and intolerance. The Human Rights Commission, both by design and in effect, lacks the independence and resources to address these issues.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS: Religion is a driving force in the sectarian violence, as a precipitating factor or a proxy for political or social issues. This, combined with the Nigerian government's toleration of criminal acts, has created a permissive environment for continued sectarian and communal violence, leading to a culture of impunity. The culture of impunity must be broken by the top levels of Nigerian government, including the highest ranking state and federal officials. USCIRF has concluded that Nigeria could, if it wished, muster the resources and capacity necessary to address communal, sectarian, and religious violence and intolerance. It must do so for the country to realize lasting progress, security, stability, and prosperity as a democracy. The United States should urge Nigeria to prevent and contain recurring sectarian violence by bringing perpetrators to justice, and should ensure that these issues are an important component

of discussions of the newly established U.S.-Nigeria Bi-National Commission. Additional recommendations for U.S. policy towards Nigeria can be found at the end of this chapter.

Religious Freedom Conditions

Recurrent Sectarian Violence in Jos

Since 1999, acts of violence in Nigeria in which religion was a significant factor have resulted in more than 12,000 people killed and thousands displaced, with numerous churches, mosques, businesses, vehicles, private homes and other structures burned and destroyed. Fatalities include members of warring factions, security forces, and innocent bystanders, but no one to date has been prosecuted for their role in perpetrating violence. The most severe clashes have occurred in Jos, Plateau state (September 2001, November 2008, January 2010, March 2010); Kaduna state (February and May 2000 and November 2002); Kano state and Yelwa, Plateau state (February-May 2004); and northern and southeastern Nigeria (February 2006).

Most recently, in January and March 2010, the city of Jos and several surrounding villages in Plateau State experienced horrific sectarian clashes with close to 1,000 people killed. Religion became a driving force in the violence, although it is unclear whether religion was the precipitating or a proxy issue to the violence.

In January 2010, more than 300 people were killed and thousands displaced in sectarian violence in Jos. Many of those killed reportedly were from the predominantly Muslim Hausa-Fulani community, with the attackers coming from the predominantly Christian Berom tribe. Although many Christian representatives contest this account, most Muslim representatives the USCIRF delegation met with in March 2010 believe it to be true. This difference in perception is part of the dynamic that exists between the communities and cannot be ignored.

The violence reportedly was sparked by the re-building of a home owned by a Muslim Hausa-Fulani resident of Jos. Simmering communal tensions from previous violence in the area and the lack of accountability for perpetrators also were contributing factors. The federal government reportedly arraigned approximately 200 people and transported them to Abuja for their involvement in the violence. However, federal-state jurisdictional disputes appear to be hampering prosecutions. At the time of writing, there was no clear resolution to these jurisdictional issues indicating when or by whom those arrested will be prosecuted.

In March 2010, in a so-called ricochet attack against the Christian Berom villages of Dogo-Nahawa, Zot, and Rassat, approximately 500 people were killed, including many women and children, and thousands displaced. According a March 2010 *New York Times* interview with detained perpetrators, as well as USCIRF's interlocutors in Abuja in March 2010, the perpetrators were from the predominantly Muslim Hausa-Fulani community and were carrying out reprisal attacks for the January 2010 violence. Several hundred people had been killed by the time the Nigerian police and army responded. The Nigerian military surrounded the city of Jos and nearby areas and imposed a dawn to dusk curfew, which continued at the end of the reporting period. Despite these measures, approximately twelve people were killed outside Jos in the predominantly Christian, ethnic Berom village of Byei less than a week after the initial attacks. As of this writing, no additional large-scale incidents have occurred, but news accounts indicate that individual reprisal murders are continuing, such as when a person enters a neighborhood and is identified as being of a different religious background.

Nigerian authorities reportedly have arrested approximately 160 people for their participation in the March 2010 violence. Nigerian officials told a visiting USCIRF delegation in March 2010 that charges were being filed in federal courts against several perpetrators of the violence. Subsequent news reports indicate that charges were filed against several suspects. However, questions remain as to who has jurisdiction to prosecute – federal or state authorities. Jurisdictional disputes aside, the prosecution of perpetrators of sectarian violence is a matter of political will, and the USCIRF delegation

heard reports that neither state nor federal officials have ever prosecuted individuals for these crimes.

The fact that two large-scale, separate incidents occurred in the same area within two months of each other has led to fears that religious and ethnic tensions could spiral out of control in Plateau State and further divide Nigerians along religious lines. USCIRF urges federal and state officials to initiate prosecutions that result in fair and just convictions so as to begin to end the culture of impunity.

Following the January and March 2010 violence, the Acting President of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan, formed a presidential advisory committee on the Jos crisis. The committee reportedly submitted an interim report to the Acting President in late March, with a more complete report possibly to be submitted later this year. However, the details of the March report have not been made public. There has been a pattern in Nigeria, after outbreaks of sectarian violence, of government entities initiating public hearings or creating advisory bodies to review the causes of the violence and develop recommendations to prevent recurrences. The March 2009 public hearings initiated by the Nigerian House of Representatives regarding the 2008 violence in Jos were openly critical of state governments and political parties for their negligence in preventing and igniting the violence. However, most federal or state level commission reports are never released to the public and the Nigerian government does not implement the recommendations.

During its October 2009 visit to Nigeria, the USCIRF delegation met with then Attorney General and Minister of Justice Michael Aondoaka (who was replaced in February 2010; his successor, in turn, was replaced in April). USCIRF expressed concern at the years of impunity and failure to prosecute perpetrators of sectarian violence. Mr. Aondoaka responded that prosecution was the responsibility of the state attorneys general. He asked USCIRF to write him a letter of inquiry regarding the status of prosecutions for sectarian violence that he could then send to the various state attorneys general. On October 16, 2009, U.S. Ambassador Robin Sanders sent a letter on USCIRF's behalf asking Mr. Aondoaka to "provide, in concert with state attorneys general, any information on the investigations and prosecutions" on the major violent sectarian incidents since 1999." Neither the U.S. Embassy nor USCIRF has received any response from Minister Aondoaka or his successors, which suggests that the Nigerian government remains unwilling or unable to address these issues.

USCIRF is hopeful that the Acting President and his administration will show the necessary political will to prosecute perpetrators of the January and March 2010 violence and end the longstanding culture of impunity surrounding sectarian conflicts in Nigeria. However, USCIRF is concerned that Nigeria now has its third Attorney General and Minister of Justice in three months and that prosecutions may be hampered by new personnel unfamiliar with the pending cases. The Nigerian government must hold accountable for their crimes the perpetrators of both outbreaks of violence; prosecuting individuals from only one side of the ethnic and religious divide will only exacerbate communal tensions.

Other Incidents of Sectarian Violence

There were other violent clashes between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria in 2009-10, predominantly in the northern states. According to the State Department's *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom*, a June 17, 2009 incident in Niger State resulted in the death of a Christian pastor and an April 20, 2009 unverified incident in Kano resulted in Christians being attacked and their property being burned.

In addition, in February 2009, Muslim-Christian clashes in Bauchi state resulted in at least 11 deaths, although some reports indicated as many as 20 people were killed, and 1,500 individuals were displaced. In addition, 14 churches, eight parsonages, one mosque and approximately 150 homes and businesses were burned and/or destroyed. The causes of the violence reportedly included a dispute between Christians and Muslims in a church parking lot, reprisal for the burning of two mosques in the state capital, and retaliation for events in Jos in November 2008 when rioting Muslims were shot for defying a

government imposed curfew. In an April 2009 incident, a group of Muslims in central Niger state reportedly attacked a procession of Christians celebrating Easter in two separate towns. Clashes ensued and dozens of Christians were injured and at least two churches and one mosque were burned.

Intra-Islamic sectarian violence

In December 2009 in Bauchi State, an extremist Islamist sect called *Kalo Kato* engaged in intra-sect violence in which at least 38 people, mostly co-religionists, were killed. The apparent cause of the violence was rivalry and suspicion between the leader of the *Kalo Kato* group and his followers.

In July 2009, between 900 and 2,000 people were killed in the northern Nigerian states of Bauchi, Borno, Kano, and Yobe when a Muslim sect calling itself *Boko Haram* ("Western education is sacrilege" in the Hausa language) attacked police after several members of the sect were arrested. The group seeks the implementation of a harsh form of sharia law in Nigeria. In addition to attacking police, numerous churches were burned, and reports indicate at least three Christian pastors were murdered. Over 100 individuals reportedly were arrested for their role in the violence or for membership in the group, but it is unclear how many, if any, prosecutions followed. The situation ended when the Nigerian military responded to the attacks, killing or capturing many *Boko Haram* members. Recently released photos and videos implicate Nigerian police in extrajudicial killings of members of the sect, including the group's leader, while they were in custody. The government of Acting President Jonathan reportedly has made inquiries into these reports, but the status of those investigations is unknown.

Concerning Shi'a Muslims, according to the State Department's 2009 *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom*, "state officials in Sokoto State allegedly continue to engage in a coordinated campaign of persecution of Shi'a Muslims...detaining large numbers of Shi'a and their religious leaders." The State Department report also notes that, based on NGO information, Shi'a homes and business were destroyed, with little to no response from state officials, and Shi'a were fired from jobs on account of their faith.

The Sharia Controversy

Since October 1999, 12 northern Nigerian states have established, or announced plans to establish, sharia law in their criminal code. However, there have not been further enactments in the past year. Despite differences between them, each of the 12 states are working to extend the jurisdiction of sharia courts beyond personal status matters to include sharia crimes and punishments for Muslims alone. Punishments include amputation, flogging, or death by stoning. Trials in the sharia courts often fall short of basic international legal standards, and defendants have limited rights of appeal and sometimes have no opportunity to seek legal representation. Women face discrimination under these provisions, especially in adultery cases where pregnancy alone has been used as adequate evidence of guilt. Allegations of rape and sexual violence rarely are investigated.

In addition to changing the criminal code so that it purportedly would apply only to Muslims, some states in recent years have instituted or tolerated discriminatory practices based on religious precepts. These include banning the sale and consumption of alcohol and disadvantaging women in education, health care, and public transportation. These practices affect Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The *Hisbah*, or religious police, funded and supported by state governments in Zamfara, Niger, Kaduna, and Kano, enforce sharia statutes in their respective states. In some areas, the *Hisbah* primarily worked as traffic wardens and marketplace regulators.

A debate has arisen in recent years over whether sharia punishments, such as death by stoning and amputation, constitute torture or inhumane or degrading treatment under international law or the Nigerian Constitution. The UN Committee against Torture and the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture have stated that flogging, stoning, and amputation do breach the prohibition against inhuman or degrading treatment contained in

international human rights standards and treaties. On this issue, the UN Special Rapporteur stated that the Nigerian government should ensure that practices and codes of all states are in compliance with international human rights conventions, and it should conduct an "assessment of all the laws in force and analyze their compatibility with international human rights law." The government has not yet done so. However, in recent years a number of stoning cases have been reversed on appeal in Nigerian courts, and there have been no floggings or amputations carried out during the reporting period.

Discrimination and Extremism

Christians in northern Nigerian states complain of what they view as discrimination at the hands of Muslim-controlled governments and describe their communities as being "second-class citizens." Most complaints predate the sharia initiatives discussed above, and include allegations of official discrimination through the denial of applications to build or repair places of worship, access to education and state-run media, representation in government bodies, and government employment. Reports indicate that in certain northern states, it is very difficult to obtain permits to repair or build a non-Muslim place of worship, and that some Christian churches have been torn down because they lacked appropriate government permits, and specific zoning laws are invoked to justify action or inaction by state authorities.

Muslim communities in southeastern Nigeria echo some of the complaints of minority Christian communities in northern Nigeria. Southern Muslim leaders report official or officially sanctioned discrimination in the media, education, and representation in government institutions. Although the Nigerian constitution permits proselytizing, several northern states continue to ban some public religious activities under the guise of public safety and security.

Several observers inside and outside of Nigeria have reported that financial support from Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan has been used to build mosques and Islamic religious schools in northern Nigeria. Some have suggested that the extreme interpretation of Islam being preached in these mosques and religious schools is a nontraditional form of Islam in Nigeria. Also, there are reports that an increasing number of Nigerian Islamic scholars and clerics are being trained in Saudi Arabia or Pakistan, and return with a politico-religious ideology that explicitly promotes hatred of, and violence against, non-Muslims.

Similarly, there continue to be reports of foreign sources of funding and support for Islamist extremist activities in northern Nigeria. The July 2009 *Boko Haram* incident demonstrated that violent Islamist groups can gain a foothold in certain areas in Northern Nigeria. There have been a number of small, vocal Muslim groups in northern Nigeria that advocate strict application of sharia and which, some argue, are helping create a haven for radical Islamist militants from both inside and outside Nigeria. After the large-scale violence exhibited against the Nigerian government by members of the *Boko Haram*, Nigerian and American authorities could place a high priority on addressing the possible alignment of these groups with international terrorist groups.

Other Developments

Over the past year, some state governors, including those from northern states, actively encouraged interfaith and inter-communal discussions in an attempt to prevent further violence and tension along religious lines. However, implementation of such efforts is limited and varies from state to state. The two co-chairs of the Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) – the President of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, the Sultan of Sokoto Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar and Archbishop John Onaiyekan, the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja and President of the Christian Association of Nigeria – continue to jointly issue statements and conduct appearances around the country in an attempt to reduce inter-religious tension and promote inter-religious cooperation. Since assuming leadership of the NIREC which is composed of 25 Muslim and 25 Christian leaders, both co-chairs have made the Council more active and visible around the country. The Nigerian government continues to publicly support NIREC and other non-governmental organizations that promote reconciliation and inter-religious understanding.

U.S. Policy

The United States and Nigeria have a strong relationship. The most populous country in Africa and with a population evenly split between Christians and Muslims, Nigeria is important to U.S. foreign policy for a number of reasons. Having had its first transition of power since independence from one civilian government to another in 2003, democratic institutions remain underdeveloped. A large Nigerian diaspora community resides in the United States and significant trade relations exist between the two countries. The United States is Nigeria's largest trading partner and Nigeria is, by some estimates, the fourth largest supplier of imported oil to the United States. Nigeria's contribution to international peacekeeping missions has supported stability and peace in Africa and has generally been in concert with U.S. interests in promoting peace and stability on the continent.

In April 2010, the two countries established a U.S.-Nigeria Bi-National Commission. Its purpose, in the words of Secretary Clinton, is to help the two countries "work together on issues of common concern and shared responsibility" and to "support the aspirations of the Nigerian people for a peaceful, prosperous, stable, democratic future." The Bi-National Commission will have four working groups on: 1) good governance and transparency, focusing on the upcoming 2011 elections, corruption, and strengthening Nigeria's democratic institutions and civil society; 2) regional cooperation and collaboration on security, terrorism, and the Niger Delta; 3) energy reform and investment; and 4) food security and agricultural development. USCIRF notes that the issue of recurrent sectarian violence and the culture of impunity surrounding the failure to prosecute perpetrators is not specifically addressed in any of the four working groups and strongly encourages Secretary Clinton and the Nigerian government to include this important issue in both the good governance and security groups.

The administration requested over \$480 million in foreign assistance to Nigeria for Fiscal Year 2009. By far the largest component of U.S. assistance is the Global HIV/AIDS Initiative, but U.S. assistance also has focused on democratic governance, professionalization of the security services, economic and agricultural support and assistance, and improving health and education services. Nigeria is a participant in the Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, a regional U.S. security partnership, and according to the Congressional Research Service, also receives other security assistance through Department of Defense funds.

With national elections scheduled to occur sometime in 2011, election assistance and related programming is a priority for U.S. assistance in FY 2010. According to the Department of State's 2009 *Advancing Freedom and Democracy Report*, the U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in the country "aims to help build an accountable and transparent democracy that respects human rights and rule of law, demonstrates good governance, and includes a robust civil society and conflict resolution mechanisms. U.S. priorities are focused on the need for the government to improve the political environment, to hold free and fair elections, and to strengthen the rule of law. Electoral reform, anticorruption efforts, mitigating ethnic and religious violence, improving judicial and legislative independence, and strengthening media freedom are important components of this strategy."

Specific to religious freedom and sectarian violence issues, the report indicates that the United States works with the Nigerian government to provide human rights training to troops engaged in international peacekeeping and address issues of domestic conflict, has implemented a capacity building program at a mediation center in Kaduna to better address ethnic and religious violence, and works with state officials and Muslim and Christian leaders to promote peace and end religious discrimination. For example, a U.S. program operating in five states (Delta, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, and Rivers) promotes local conflict mitigation by educating community and opinion leaders, youth groups, and faith-based organizations about the benefits of peaceful coexistence.

USCIRF Activities

Nigeria has been a high priority in the Commission's work in 2009-10. USCIRF delegations

traveled to Nigeria in March-April 2009, October 2009, and March 2010 to investigate reports of sectarian violence and its impact on religious freedom. During these three trips, Commissioners engaged high-level federal and state officials on the government's failure to prevent sectarian violence and discussed USCIRF's recommendation that Nigeria be designated a CPC. USCIRF delegations met several cabinet ministers whose agencies have jurisdiction in these matters, as well as Nigerian Senators and Assembly representatives who exercise oversight over these agencies.

During the past year, Commissioners and staff also met with a broad range of U.S. government officials to discuss USCIRF's recommendations and concerns regarding Nigeria, including officials from the National Security Council, Department of State, Congress and other officials. USCIRF also has raised the issue of sectarian violence in correspondence with Secretary of State Hilary Clinton.

In September 2009, USCIRF Chair Leonard Leo testified before the congressional International Religious Freedom Caucus on *Prospects for Justice in Northern and Central Nigeria: Government Responses to Religious Extremism and Root Causes*. Mr. Leo discussed USCIRF's trip to Abuja, Kaduna, Kano, and Bauchi city, and its meetings with government officials and Muslim and Christian religious leaders. Mr. Leo conveyed the Commissioners' views that the government of Nigeria has done little to prevent sectarian violence and has made no serious efforts to investigate or prosecute the perpetrators of the numerous sectarian killings.

In April 2009, USCIRF hosted a public briefing on Capitol Hill with Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III, the Sultan of Sokoto, and Rev. Dr. John Onaiyekan, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Abuja and president of the Christian Association of Nigeria. They discussed the causes of and challenges in addressing Nigeria's recurring inter-religious and ethnic violence. In addition, throughout the past year, USCIRF staff met with members of non-governmental organizations representing various religious communities in Nigeria, human rights organizations, academics, and other Nigeria experts.

USCIRF is encouraged that some of its long-standing recommendations regarding Nigeria are being implemented, such as the gradual expansion of the Nigeria Inter Religious Council to some regional levels and the planned establishment by the Department of State of a consulate or other official presence in the city of Kano, Kano State.

Recommendations

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 March 2010, January 2010, and November 2008 Jos incidents, as well as 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;
- 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;
- include the issue of Nigeria's recurrent sectarian violence and failure to prosecute perpetrators in the discussions of the working groups of good governance and security of the newly formed U.S.-Nigeria Bi-National Commission;
- 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, that are responsible for preventing sectarian violence, prosecuting perpetrators of sectarian violence, and responding to the various crises;
- call on UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon to report on the January and March 2010 Jos violence to the Security Council, and urge Secretary-General Ban's Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide, Francis Deng, whom Ban tasked with examining the March 2010 violence in Jos, to visit Nigeria and issue an extensive report of his findings; 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 ensure sufficient funding for technical and programmatic assistance, while insisting that such assistance is consistent with all U.S. laws restricting foreign support and is otherwise not provided to individuals or units whom the Secretary of State deems to have engaged in serious violations of human rights or religious freedom, 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 so that they are more adequately trained in non-lethal responses to crowd control and in quelling mob or sectarian violence, and increase their investigative, community policing, crowd control, and conflict prevention capacities, including providing on-the-ground technical advisors;
- providing technical assistance and engaging with federal and state government officials, including the National Assembly, on whether state governments should be

allowed to have state level police forces, instead of the current system of having only a national federal police force;

- providing technical assistance to help the Nigerian police and military procure and operate communications equipment and improve response mechanisms and coordination capacity to enhance the prevention of sectarian violence and increase emergency response times;
- offering technical assistance to the office of the Federal Attorney General and Minister of Justice, and to the state attorneys general, to increase their capacity to prosecute perpetrators of sectarian violence, including training and retraining state and police prosecutors and assisting in the development of computer/electronic file and case storage;
- analyzing and reporting to the Congress on ways U.S. assistance can be better utilized to promote reconciliation and prevent sectarian violence in Nigeria;
- 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, which was formed to promote dialogue between Christians and Muslims, and replicate NIREC at the regional, state, and local levels by providing technical advisors to help the institution better initiate and implement NIREC at all levels;
- increase USAID funding for conflict mitigation work with Nigerian NGOs engaging on communal conflict prevention, 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:

- enhance the use of legal and law enforcement mechanisms and intelligence capabilities to prevent the formation of religiously based violent groups;
- 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:

- continue to proceed with plans to open a consulate or other official presence in Kano, and Congress should fully fund this effort in the current appropriations cycle;
 - provide Embassy and Consulate staff with appropriate local language skills, and require 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;
 - 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; and
 - increase the Embassy's profile and understanding by dedicating one foreign service officer to coordinate outreach and relationships with, and conduct analysis of, Nigeria's diverse religious communities.
-