

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 6, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
United States Department of State  
2201 C St NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Secretary Blinken:

We write to you once again with deep disappointment over the State Department's refusal to designate Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC). The horrific slaughter of Nigerian Christians around Christmas Day should have spurred you to action, but you have again failed to meet the moment. We remain very concerned about the deteriorating state of religious freedom in Nigeria and your Department's continued failure to appropriately respond using the tools at your disposal.

During a Christmas season that should have been abundant with joy and peace, Christians in several Nigerian farming villages faced one of the deadliest massacres in the country's recent history.<sup>1</sup> From December 23 to December 25, 2023, Islamic extremists murdered at least 140 people, including women and children, with an untold number wounded and displaced as a result of this senseless violence.<sup>2</sup> It was a targeted attack carried out with shocking brutality.

As you know, violence against Christians in Nigeria runs rampant. Reports estimate that roughly 5,000 Nigerian Christians have been murdered in religiously-motivated violence in each of the last two years.<sup>3</sup> We wrote to you last on June 29, 2022, following the murders of at least 50 Nigerian churchgoers and the mob stoning of a Christian college student in Nigeria. But this letter was met with a total lack of action by your Department. Apparently, your Department believes these repeated, violent attacks against Christians can be attributed to climate change.<sup>4</sup> That is absurd.

Nigeria continues to be one of the most dangerous countries in the world for Christians.<sup>5</sup> Since the Biden Administration de-listed Nigeria as a CPC in 2021, religious freedom protections have eroded under the Nigerian government. Yet the State Department again refused to re-designate Nigeria as a CPC last month—contrary to the recommendations of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and numerous religious freedom and human rights organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.foxnews.com/world/christmas-eve-attack-nigeria-leaves-least-people-dead-homes-burned>

<sup>2</sup> <https://time.com/6551014/nigeria-farmer-herder-mass-killing/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2024/01/11/christmas-attack-nigeria-christians-islamists-246902>

<sup>4</sup>

[https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2024/01/05/blinken\\_rejects\\_calls\\_to\\_add\\_nigeria\\_to\\_blacklist\\_150280.html](https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2024/01/05/blinken_rejects_calls_to_add_nigeria_to_blacklist_150280.html)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.opendoors.org.au/world-watch-list/>

You must not stand idly by while Nigerian Christians continue to be murdered for their faith. We urge you to immediately use the tools at your disposal and re-designate Nigeria as a CPC. We will continue to conduct oversight and hold the Biden Administration accountable until you fulfill your obligation under the law.

Sincerely,



Josh Hawley  
U.S. Senator



Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senator



Mike Braun  
U.S. Senator

Cc:  
The Honorable Rashad Hussain  
Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom  
United States Department of State  
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