



OBSERVATORY FOR
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
IN AFRICA

Website: <https://orfa.africa>
Email: info@orfa.africa

SUBMISSION OF THE OBSERVATORY FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN AFRICA TO THE 45th SESSION OF THE UPR WORKING GROUP (4th CYCLE)

NIGERIA

The Observatory for Religious Freedom in Africa (ORFA) is a programme of the Foundation Platform for Social Transformation, a charity established in 2010 and registered in Voorburg, The Netherlands under Chamber of Commerce number 50264249. The aim of the foundation, as set out in its statutes, is to promote social transformation in the broadest sense, and it focuses on programmes that promote the political, socio-economic and cultural development of societies. It implements programs that contribute to issues such as democracy, human rights (in particular religious freedom), integrity (fighting corruption), conflict resolution, the protection of the rule of law, combating injustice, economic diplomacy, etc.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This submission is prepared for the fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Nigeria on 1 January 2024. Our submission relates to commitments given by Nigeria at its last UPR in the areas of:
 - B8 Human rights & counter-terrorism*
 - B52 Impunity*
 - D1 Civil & political rights - general measures of implementation*
 - D22 Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions*
 - D31 Liberty and security – general*
 - G1 Members of minorities*
2. We focus on violence in Nigeria during the reporting period, basing our submission on data that we collected through three years of gathering by our Nigerian partners within the country. This data spans the periods 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020, 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021, and 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2022. Our published report of the project is available at <https://orfa.africa/wp/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Nigeria-Killings-and-Abduction-10-2019%E2%80%932021%E2%80%93final.pdf>.
3. The project registered killings and abductions of civilians, including their religious backgrounds (Christian, Muslim or African Traditional Religionist), age and gender, in the context of an ongoing ‘culture of violence’ created by ‘Terror Groups’ such as Boko Haram, Islamic State in the West Africa Province (ISWAP), armed Fulani herders, ‘bandits’ and other, smaller groups. Where possible, the project recorded the alleged perpetrators from the ‘Terror Groups’. We chose to distinguish between the religious background of the civilian victims because a variety of contradictory analyses exists concerning the causes of violence in Nigeria, raising issues surrounding the right to the truth.
4. The data sheds light on the reality of violence in Nigeria and on the implementation of commitments made by Nigeria in its previous UPR in 2018. It brings to attention fresh information about the nature and scale of religiously motivated violence in Nigeria, and the response (or lack of it) of the Nigerian government.

II. FOLLOW UP TO THE PREVIOUS REVIEW

5. In the 3rd cycle of 2018, Nigeria received 290 recommendations and it supported 240 of them. Among the commitments that Nigeria made were the following that are relevant to this submission:
 - a) to continue to strengthen steps in the protection and promotion of human rights (Senegal’s recommendation);
 - b) to ensure the respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights for all persons, without distinction of any kind (Sweden’s recommendation);
 - c) to continue the implementation of measures and strategies to combat terrorism in order to ensure adequate protection of the population (Belarus’s recommendation);
 - d) to take further measures in implementing its programme to counter violence (Turkmenistan’s recommendation);
 - e) to continue efforts to counteract violence and improve the security and protection of people in remote areas (Cabo Verde’s recommendation);
 - f) to protect and guarantee religious freedom and the rights of people of faith in Nigeria (Chile’s recommendation);
 - g) to strengthen the fight against impunity, notably guaranteeing respect for rights in the fight against terrorism and law enforcement (France’s recommendation);

- h) to adopt measures to fight against impunity with an increased focus on Boko Haram's crimes (Portugal's recommendation);
- i) to ensure that the perpetrators of violence and crimes against children as well as adults are brought to justice (Holy See's recommendation);
- j) to investigate and punish those responsible for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, for example attacks against schools, hospitals and protected persons, humanitarian actors and their organizations, and those who committed abductions of children, civilians and humanitarian actors (Argentina's recommendations);
- k) to conduct prompt, thorough and independent investigations into allegations of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed by some government forces during counter-insurgency operations, and bring perpetrators to justice (Slovakia's recommendation).¹

III. THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION ON THE GROUND

- 6. Over the three years of our monitoring of killings and abductions in Nigeria, we uncovered a situation of extreme violence across the country.
- 7. Over the reporting periods (1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020, 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021, and 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2022) the overall total of people killed in the context of the culture of violence created by 'Terror Groups' was 27,183 (5,629 in the 2020 period; 7,569 in the 2021 period; and 13,985 in the 2022 period). The overall total of people abducted in this context was 13,843 (1,224 in the 2020 period; 4,955 in the 2021 period; and 7,664 in the 2022 period). We should stress that our data gathering is conservative in its counting.
- 8. We also found that in each of the three years, Christians were disproportionately affected by violence perpetrated by 'Terror Groups' such as Boko Haram, ISWAP, armed Fulani herders and 'bandits'.

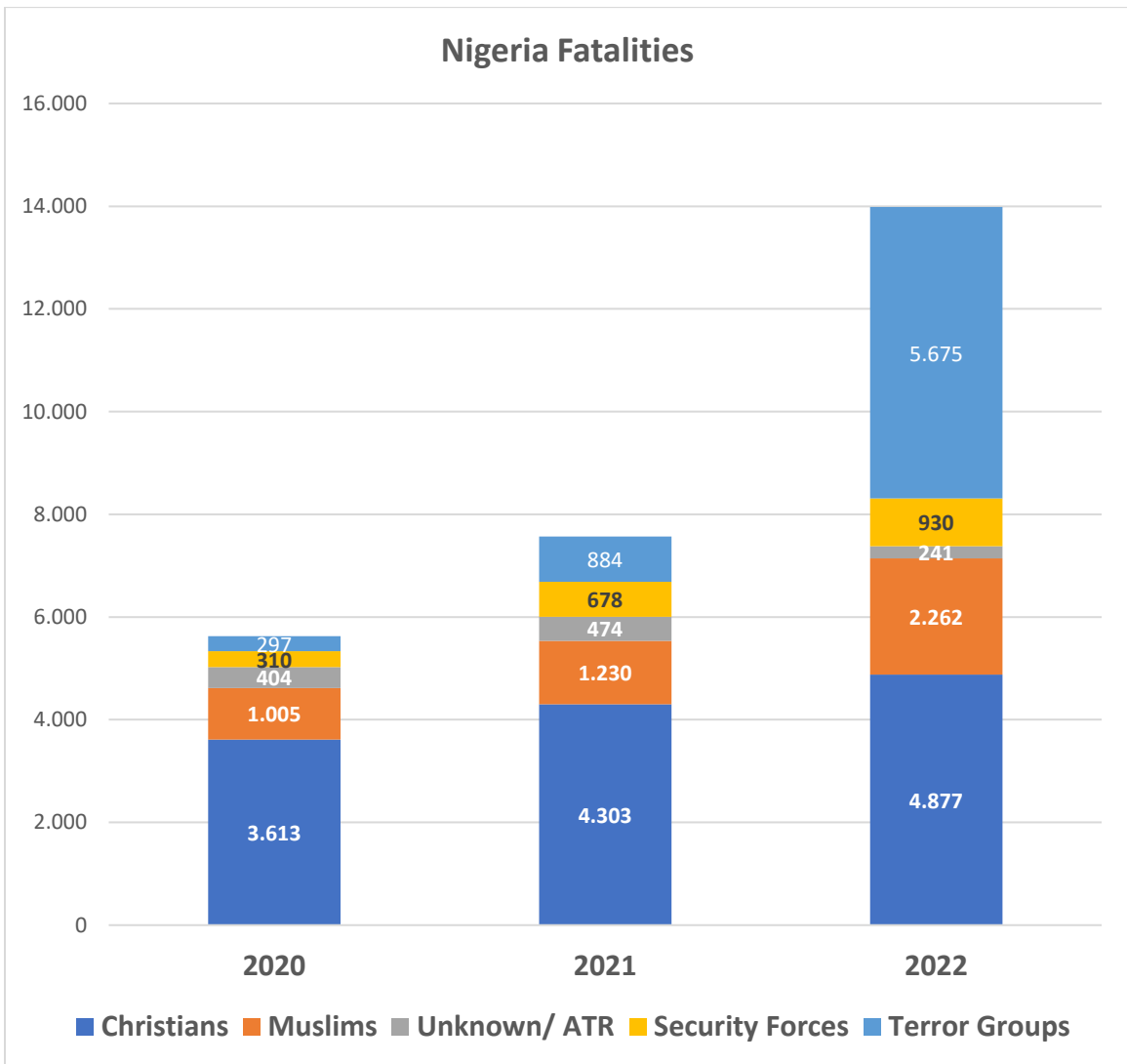
Killings in Nigeria (the right to life)

- 9. Below is a summary table showing the numerical breakdown of killings that we recorded by year and the identity of the victims. Out of the total of 27,183 recorded killings, the overall total of Christians killed was 12,793 (3,613 in the 2020 period; 4,303 in the 2021 period; and 4,877 in the 2022 period). In comparison, the overall total number of Muslims killed was 4,497 (1,005 in the 2020 period; 1,230 in the 2021 period; and 2,262 in the 2022 period). The rest of the victims were Unknown or practitioners of African Traditional Religions 1,119; Security Forces 1,918; and 'Terror Groups' 6,856.

¹ All recommendations recorded in A/HRC/40/7/Add.1.

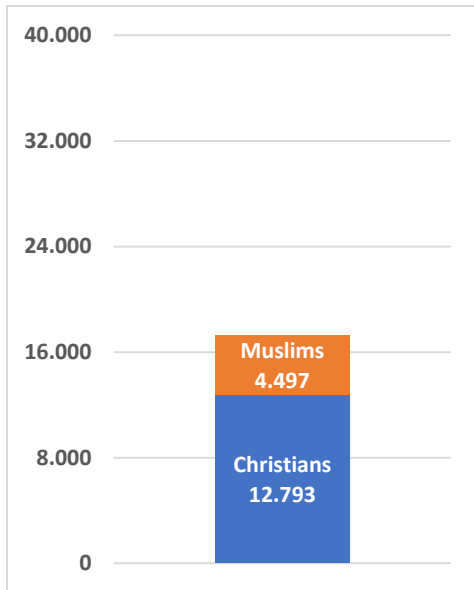
	Christians	Muslims	Unknown/ ATR	Security Forces	Terror Groups	Total
2020	3,613	1,005	404	310	297	5,629
2021	4,303	1,230	474	678	884	7,569
2022	4,877	2,262	241	930	5,675	13,985
Total	12,793	4,497	1,119	1,918	6,856	27,183

10. Below is a bar chart showing the breakdown of killings that we recorded by year and the identity of the victims.



In the chart above please read the figures with a comma instead of a decimal point.

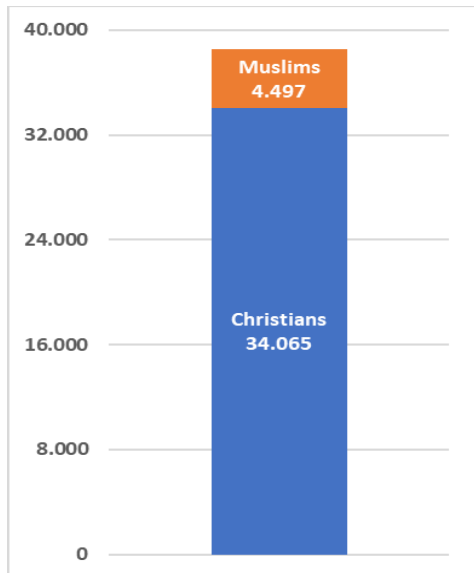
11. Below is a bar chart comparing our records of the number of Christians and the number of Muslims that have been killed over the three year period: 12,793 Christians to 4,497 Muslims. If we do not take into account the size of the Christian and Muslim populations in the geopolitical zones and states where the killings took place, over the three reporting periods the overall ratio of Christians/Muslims killed was 2.8/1.



Muslim Christian Killings 2020 - 2022

In the chart above please read the figures with a comma instead of a decimal point.

12. If we take into account the size of the Christian and Muslim populations in the geopolitical zones and states where the killings took place, the number of Christians killed was proportionally (much) higher than the overall number: over the three reporting periods (covering Oct 2019 – Sept 2022) the adjusted overall ratio of Christians/Muslims killed was 7.6/1.



Proportional Muslim Christian Killings 2020 - 2022

In the chart above please read the figures with a comma instead of a decimal point.

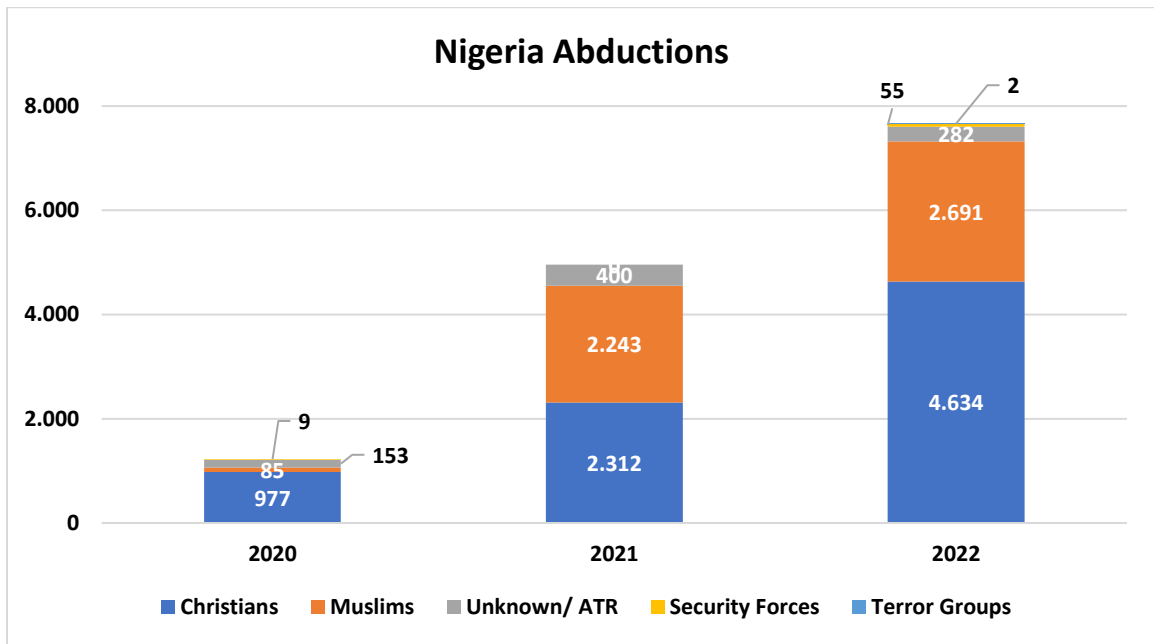
13. For Christians as well as Muslims, there was an increase in killings of around 20% from the 2020 period to the 2021 period. From the 2021 period to the 2022 period the increase in Christians killed was 13%, while the increase in Muslims killed was 84% (even so, there were still more Christians killed).
14. The great majority of civilians killed related to attacks on communities (eg. villages, neighbourhoods of cities etc). The number of attacks involving civilians killed in communities has consistently increased over the 2020, 2021 and 2022 periods. The number of attacks that were more on an individual basis (eg. on the farm, on the road etc) remained stable in the 2020 and 2021 periods, but strongly increased in the 2022 period.
15. The total of Christians and Muslims killed during these attacks was 17,290. The total number of Christian and Muslim victims killed during attacks on communities was 14,099 (82%). The total number of Christians and Muslims killed during attacks that were more on an individual basis was 3,191 (18%).

Abductions in Nigeria (the rights to liberty and personal integrity)

16. The overall total of people abducted in the context of the culture of violence created by 'Terror Groups' was 13,843 (1,224 in the 2020 period; 4,955 in the 2021 period; and 7,664 in the 2022 period). The table below illustrates what we recorded in this regard.

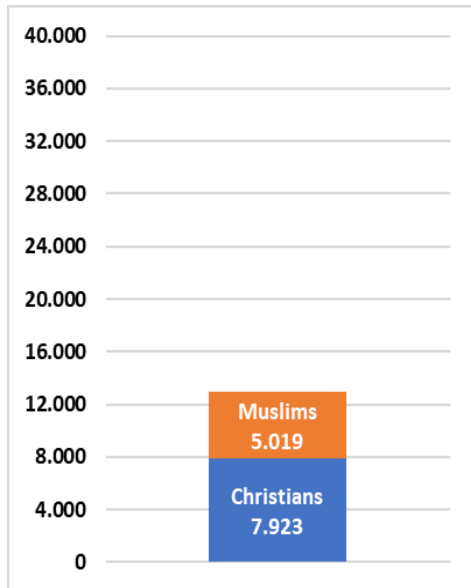
	Christians	Muslims	Unknown/ ATR	Security Forces	Terror Groups	Total
2020	977	85	153	9	0	1,224
2021	2,312	2,243	400	0	0	4,955
2022	4,634	2,691	282	55	2	7,664
Total	7,923	5,019	835	64	2	13,843

17. Below is a bar chart showing the breakdown of abductions that we recorded by year and the identity of the victims.



In the chart above please read the figures with a comma instead of a decimal point.

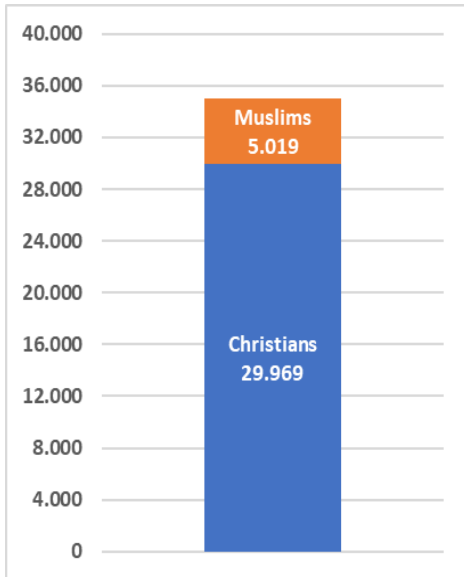
18. Out of the 13,843 abductions that we recorded, the overall total of Christians was 7,923 (977 in the 2020 period; 2,312 in the 2021 period; and 4,634 in the 2022 period). In comparison, the overall total number of Muslims was 5,019 (85 in the 2020 period; 2,243 in the 2021 period; and 2,691 in the 2022 period). If we do not take into account the size of the Christian and Muslim populations in the geopolitical zones and states where the abductions took place, the overall ratio of Christians/Muslims abducted was 1.6/1.



In the chart above please read the figures with a comma instead of a decimal point.

19. If we take into account the size of the Christian and Muslim populations in the geopolitical zones and states where the abductions took place, the number of Christians abducted

was proportionally (much) higher than the overall number. Over the three reporting periods (covering Oct 2019 – Sept 2022) the adjusted overall ratio of Christians/Muslims abducted was 6.0/1.



**Proportional
Muslim Christian
Abductions 2020 - 2022**

In the chart above please read the figures with a comma instead of a decimal point.

20. For both Christians as well as Muslims, there was an increase in abductions from the 2020 period to the 2021 period. For Christians the number more than doubled, for Muslims the number multiplied by 25. From the 2021 period to the 2022 period the increase in Christians abducted doubled again, while the increase of Muslims abducted was 20%.
21. The great majority of civilians abducted is related to attacks on communities. The number of attacks on communities involving civilians abducted increased significantly in the 2021 period, followed by a slight decrease in the 2022 period. The number of attacks that were more on an individual basis consistently increased from the 2020 to the 2022 periods, with the greatest increase occurring in the 2022 period (153%).
22. The total of Christians and Muslims abducted during these attacks was 12,942. The total number of Christians and Muslims abducted during attacks on communities was 9,942 (77%). The total number of Christians and Muslims abducted during attacks that were more on an individual basis was 3,000 (23%).

IV. OBSERVATIONS

23. Our data collection is an ongoing statistical project. Three years of monitoring have revealed a situation of extreme violence against civilians that appears to be organised, systematic and widespread. What we see suggests that international crimes have been committed, and that they continue to take place in Nigeria. Our data shows that the violence is escalating, spreading, and the actors are diversifying. The statistics are also showing that the members of one religious group, Christians, are disproportionately

affected to the extent that we can suggest there may be deliberate targeting. We also know from our monitoring that the situation of religious extremism and violence in Nigeria has affected other countries in the Sub-Saharan region, such as Burkina Faso and Mali, and is becoming a threat to international peace and security.

24. While our project has not focused on the actions or inactions of Nigeria in terms of its legal obligations, we have encountered a number of issues relevant to the issue of the State conduct raising issues of responsibility. They include the following:
- allegations of governmental indifference to its obligations to prevent and protect;
 - allegations of failure to prevent attacks on vulnerable populations (e.g. no presence, attacks take place despite a security presence);
 - allegations of failure to intervene or unreasonably delayed responses when attacks or crimes are taking place;
 - allegations of inadequate response to solving crimes and the lack of/absence of accountability; and
 - allegations of discrimination or collusion by the Nigerian security forces.

Illustrative substantiations for these claims are provided in Annex 2 filed alongside our written submission. We draw these weighty allegations to the attention of the Council for consideration alongside our own scientifically collated data.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

25. The situation in Nigeria is very grave, and also increasingly complex. To recap, by our conservative assessment, in the last three years 27,183 civilians were killed and 13,777 were abducted in the context of the culture of violence created by 'Terror Groups', with the majority of them being Christians. This alone allows us to challenge any claim that the earlier-highlighted commitments that Nigeria made to the previous Human Rights Council have been fulfilled.
26. We call for a robust engagement by the Human Rights Council in its interaction with Nigeria. The enormity of the situation, the risks of further escalation and the likely spillover beyond national borders are such that we recommend the establishment of a United Nations international commission of inquiry into the situation in Nigeria. The commission should, we suggest, include seasoned human rights investigators and specialists in international criminal law. It should have a wide temporal mandate and should consider appropriate measures under the doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). For its part, we suggest that Nigeria should urgently seek international Rule of Law assistance to strengthen its capacities. It must cooperate with any international mechanisms that are set up to investigate the matter of the widespread, systematic and gross violations of human rights and humanitarian law that have been and are taking place on its territory.

ANNEX

1. Observatory for Religious Freedom in Africa, 'Killings and Abductions in Nigeria (10/2019 – 9/2022)', 24 February 2023 (revised version).
2. Observatory for Religious Freedom in Africa, Table documenting human rights allegations against the government of Nigeria, July 2023.
3. UK All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief, 'Nigeria: Unfolding Genocide? Three Years On', 4 July 2023.
4. UK All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief, 'Nigeria: Unfolding Genocide? An Inquiry by the UK All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief', 15 June 2020.
5. Open Doors International / World Watch Research, 'Nigeria: Full Country Dossier', April 2023.
6. Aid to the Church in Need, 'Persecuted and Forgotten? A Report on Christians oppressed for their Faith 2020-22', 16 November 2022.
7. HART, Joint Visit Report, 'Breaking Point in Central Nigeria? Terror and Mass Displacement in the Middle Belt', March 2022.
8. UN Doc A/HRC/47/33/Add.2, 'Visit to Nigeria - Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Agnès Callamard', 11 June 2021.
9. International Committee On Nigeria (ICON) & International Organization on Peace-building & Social Justice (PSJ), 'Nigeria Silent Slaughter: Genocide in Nigeria and the Implications for the International Community', July 2020. [only available as an e-book, at <https://clientwebproof.com/Nigeria-Silent-Slaughter/>]
10. The Right Reverend Philip Mounstephen, Bishop of Truro, 'Bishop of Truro's Independent Review for the Foreign Secretary of FCO Support for Persecuted Christians: Final Report and Recommendations', July 2019.