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Press release

As Pentecost massacre victims are laid to rest, Christian Solidarity International asks Liz Truss to take action on Nigeria

John Eibner calls on British Foreign Secretary to declare Nigeria “country of particular concern” at International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief

On Friday, the Catholic Diocese of Ondo state in Nigeria laid to rest the bodies of more than 40 churchgoers who were murdered on Pentecost Sunday. Today, Christian Solidarity International (CSI) is calling on British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss to use the upcoming ministerial for freedom of religion or belief in London to designate Nigeria as a “country of particular concern” for “systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom.”

On June 5, gunmen attacked St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in the city of Owo during Pentecost mass, killing dozens, including children. Until now, this sort of attack has been rare in Nigeria’s Christian-majority southwest. No one has been arrested for the attack.

In an [open letter](#) to Foreign Secretary Truss, Dr. John Eibner, the president of CSI, warned that “Nigeria has experienced a spike in atrocity crimes committed against Christians” since U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s decision last November to remove Nigeria from the U.S.’ own list of “countries of particular concern.”

“Washington’s declaration that it had no ‘particular concern’ about religious freedom in Nigeria was openly celebrated by advisors of Nigeria’s President Muhammadu Buhari,” Eibner noted. “But it was widely condemned by representatives of Nigeria’s victimized religious communities.”

The upcoming International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief, scheduled for July 5-6 in London, is part of a series of religious freedom ministerials that was launched by the US government in Washington DC in 2019. A UK government strategy document from July 2021, “Global Britain in a Competitive Age,” highlighted the planned 2022 Ministerial, and called the “campaign for religious freedom” a “vital instrument of our influence overseas.”

Eibner urged Truss to use the Ministerial to propose “the adoption of a resolution declaring that Nigeria is indeed a ‘Country of Particular Concern’” and to “urge Secretary Blinken to reinstate Nigeria on the U.S. Department of State’s list.”

About CSI

Christian Solidarity International is an international human rights group campaigning for religious liberty and human dignity. It runs a website, www.nigeria-report.org, to draw attention to the violence and religious cleansing taking place in Nigeria.

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