



**For God and History: Exposing the
Fallacy of Christian Victimhood and
Muslim Persecution in Nigeria**

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Concerned Muslim Advocacy Network

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¹ *Sunan Abi Dawud* (4811).

Dedication

We dedicate this write-up to all Muslims who have lost their lives, property, or opportunities due to communal or ethno-religious conflicts, Islamophobia, marginalisation, or oppression arising from the manipulation of truth, outright falsehood, and the spread of misinformation or disinformation by the enemies of peace in Nigeria. We also dedicate it to late Dr. Mustapha Isa Qasim, and all those who consistently stand by, promote, and defend the truth.

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Foreword

The ‘experiment’ of 1914, which brought together regions and peoples with varying ethnic, cultural, religious, and historical backgrounds to form a single nation, has continued to navigate many challenges and periods of instability, which often threaten the continued existence of the political entity called Nigeria. The Sokoto and Kanem-Borno Islamic states, which had existed long before the advent of colonialism, upheld values of coexistence and recognized the rights of the various ethnic groupings to maintain their languages, cultures, and religions. The amalgamation widened the scope, dimension, and dynamics of the socio-political relations between the various ethno-religious groupings in the country.

From the outset, there was suspicion and fear of dominance from all regions, which became compounded on the eve of attaining independence, and subsequently by the political games that were played after independence. The adoption of democracy as a system of government in Nigeria meant that population and majority votes would play a significant role in determining leadership and political power, and they did, but unfortunately, the democratic experiment was violently truncated. The assassination of Muslim political leaders and army officers by a group of Christian Easterners ignited a violent crisis and civil war, at the end of which Gowon declared ‘No Victor, No Vanquished’.

Christian organizations, with massive financial and logistical support from international Church bodies, undertook vigorous missionary activities in various parts of the country. In the Southwest, Muslims were mostly admitted to schools only at the expense of their religion; they had to change their names and beliefs. The majority of

the Yoruba Muslims were marginalized in virtually all sectors. In the northern states, the missionaries instigated the non-Muslim minority to develop hostility and animosity towards the Muslim majority, with whom they had hitherto coexisted peacefully for ages. They thus planted the seeds of mistrust, envy, hatred, disharmony, and violent conflicts, which disrupted the social cohesion, peace, and development of the region.

Christianity in Nigeria sometimes promotes competition with Islam to the extent that Christians have innovated religious rites and practices in order to compete with Muslims. Early morning Christian prayers were innovated, parallel to the Muslim *Fajr* (dawn) prayer. Provision must be made for churches or Christian prayer rooms in some government secretariat buildings, even though Christians traditionally attend church only on Sundays.² Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem was made an article of Christian faith, similar to the *Hajj* (pilgrimage) in Islam. Some Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem even wore Arab attire and addressed themselves as ‘Alhaji’. While Christian clergy vehemently opposed the establishment of non-interest (Islamic) banks and the adoption of ‘Sukuk’ by the Federal Government, it would not be surprising if they later called for the establishment of a ‘Christian bank,’ whatever that would mean.³ When opposition to Muslim girls wearing the

² Sunday is the primary and official weekly worship day for the majority of Christian denominations in Nigeria. However, there are Christian denominations that hold their main weekly worship service on Saturday instead of Sunday. The largest Saturday-worshipping denomination in the country is the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

³ According to anonymous sources in the Central Bank of Nigeria, a delegation of Christians approached the apex bank shortly after the first non-interest bank was licensed in Nigeria, requesting guidelines and a regulatory framework for a Christian version. The apex bank welcomed the proposal but clarified that its role was limited to

hijab to school was finally rejected by Nigeria's apex court, some Christians called for Christian girls to wear nun's habits as school uniforms. Paradoxically, the call came despite the fact that while wearing the *hijab* outside the home is a religious requirement for Muslim girls, wearing a nun's habit outside the home is neither a tradition nor a widely taught religious obligation for Christian girls, even during church services.

In October 2025, the Federal Government invited stakeholders to launch Nigeria's National Halal Economy Strategy, aiming to tap into the more than \$2.5 trillion halal market by leveraging the country's arable land, livestock, healthcare, medicinal plants, and access to West and Central Africa. Some Christian groups opposed the initiative, claiming it would lead to Islamization and violate the secular constitution, prompting a postponement. The opposition came despite the halal economy now thriving in non-Muslim nations like Brazil, India, the U.S., China, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, and many European countries across food, dairy, cosmetics, tourism, logistics, and fintech.

This is the trend in inter-religious relations being promoted by Nigerian Christianity. The trend has remained consistent for over six decades.

developing licensing and regulatory frameworks in line with the CBN Act, BOFIA, and other extant laws, while the principles, financial contracts, products, and mechanisms of non-interest banking were first developed and presented by Muslims for scrutiny and consideration. The delegation was expected to do the same for the proposed Christian version. Almost one-and-a-half decades later, they had submitted nothing, and the matter naturally lapsed, ending the ill-intentioned competition with Muslims over non-interest banking.

Muslims, on the other hand, simply insist on their fundamental right to practice their faith and maintain their distinct identity, without infringing upon the rights of others to their faith. This is the principle that ensures justice, fairness, harmony, and sustainable peace, and this is the teaching of the Qur'an: 'Let not hatred of a people sway you to injustice. Nay, be just. That is nearest to piety.'⁴

The Christian Church and clergy in Nigeria have perfected instruments of propaganda, claiming equal population with the majority Muslims, crying wolf where none exists, and feeding the world with reports of victimization and religious persecution of Christians. It has since been discovered that this misleading misinformation and disinformation has continued to be a profitable avenue for attracting huge financial and material donations from international Church organizations.

The book *For God and History: Exposing the Fallacy of Christian Victimhood and Muslim Persecution in Nigeria* has made a significant attempt to set the record straight. Though still a relatively faint voice from the Muslim perspective, and perhaps not a fully adequate response to the extensive distortion of truth propagated by some Christian Church leaders and sections of the media, it provides an alternative narrative for those seeking a more balanced understanding of issues surrounding religious contention in Nigeria.

Muslims in Nigeria have remained silent for a long time in the face of a sustained campaign of calumny, hate speech, violent aggression, and misrepresentation, often framed within layers of bias, falsehood, and misinformation. This

⁴ Qur'an, 5:8.

silence has not been ‘golden’, as it has allowed the truth to remain buried beneath the rubble of destroyed Muslim homes, mosques, and villages, many of which have been pillaged or nearly wiped out by acts of violence carried out by Christian extremists, as chronicled in this book.

The book has further conclusively proved that Muslims have indeed demonstrated greater restraint, clemency, and tolerance than the Christians who often circulate unverified claims and continue to ride on a narrative shaped by partial truths. Brief, concise, factual, yet in-depth and analytical, this book traces the real genesis of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria, identifies the common fault lines and patterns of such conflicts, as well as some of the major actors and perpetrators of violence. I strongly recommend this book for those who seek to know the truth and to engage with alternative views and perspectives, even if they are bitter.

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Preface

Over the last three decades, Nigeria has increasingly been portrayed in international discourse as the epicenter of an alleged Christian genocide, orchestrated by Muslims and tolerated, if not facilitated, by the state. This portrayal, endlessly recycled through sermons, reports, lobbying campaigns, and media soundbites, has acquired the status of received wisdom. Yet repetition is not evidence, and emotional appeal is not proof.

This book represents an effort that began in 2020 to clarify the issues and set the record straight regarding the true nature of conflicts involving Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. That effort was undertaken in response to a growing challenge: the persistence of distorted and emotive narratives, sustained and reinforced by political interests, that have obscured the realities of Nigeria's ethno-religious conflicts. It was in this context that a group of Concerned Muslim Da'awah Workers and Intellectuals committed themselves to developing a concise, insightful, incisive, and truthful account of these conflicts, which have been incessant and, in many cases, internecine. The work was initially led by Dr. Mustapha Isa Qasim of the Department of Arts and Social Science Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, whose intellectual clarity and moral seriousness helped shape the early direction of the project. Dr. Mustapha passed away in 2021 (may Allah have mercy and compassion on him). The leadership of the group subsequently fell to Malam Adamu Abdullahi Sokoto of the Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. What you now hold is the outcome of that collective resolve and continuity of purpose.

The central contention of the book is simple but unsettling to many: the dominant narrative of Christian victimhood in

Nigeria is not supported by empirical data, historical sequencing, or a fair reading of conflict dynamics. On the contrary, when examined carefully, the record reveals a far more complex and far less comfortable truth.

The book was not written to inflame passions, reopen wounds, or deepen the already dangerous cleavages within the Nigerian polity. It was written because silence, in the face of sustained falsehood, has become a moral liability. When narratives built on distortion are repeatedly projected as truth, locally and globally, they do not merely misinform; they shape policy, legitimize injustice, embolden aggressors, and condemn victims to perpetual erasure. *For God and History* is therefore an intervention born out of necessity: a corrective to a powerful but deeply flawed narrative that has come to dominate discussions of religion, violence, and victimhood in Nigeria.

The chapters that follow interrogate this narrative through data, documented incidents, historical trajectories, and pattern analysis. They examine the origins of postcolonial violence, the early assassination of Muslim political and military leaders, the role of provocative preaching and hate speech, and the repeated failure of the state to hold Christian masterminds and ringleaders accountable. They trace how ethno-religious conflicts in Northern Nigeria have followed remarkably consistent patterns: premeditated aggression, the exploitation of trigger events, one-way violence, selective justice, and predictable outcomes in which Muslim communities bear disproportionate losses. In line with the original objectives of the project, the primary and essential focus of this book is on ethno-religious conflicts, especially in Northern Nigeria. This focus was deliberate. Emphasis was not placed on the Boko Haram insurgency or the phenomenon of banditry because the facts are

incontrovertible: Muslims have largely been the victims of those crises. There was little analytical value, for the purpose of correcting false claims of Christian victimhood, in dwelling extensively on phenomena where Muslim suffering is already undeniable.

The book also documents the often-ignored realities of systemic discrimination, marginalization, and persecution of Muslims in Southern Nigeria, particularly in education, politics, and socio-economic life, realities that rarely attract international sympathy or congressional hearings. Here too, the treatment is necessarily concise. Only brief presentations are made regarding the persecution Muslims suffer in Southern Nigeria at the hands of Christian majorities, not because the suffering is insignificant, but because the central task of this work is to refute the recurring falsehoods surrounding ethno-religious violence and victimhood in Nigeria as they are most aggressively framed in national and international discourse.

This book does not claim Muslim infallibility, nor does it deny that Christians have suffered violence in Nigeria. Suffering is not a monopoly, and grief recognizes no creed. What this work rejects is the deliberate inversion of roles: the transformation of aggressors into perpetual victims and the erasure of Muslim pain from both national memory and global conscience. It challenges the weaponization of religion for political leverage, financial gain, and international lobbying, and it exposes how selective storytelling has become a tool of moral blackmail against the Nigerian state and Muslim communities.

The methodology of this book is intentionally direct. It relies on verifiable data, court records, public statements, media reports, and historical timelines. It interrogates claims

against evidence, not sentiment. It asks uncomfortable questions about why certain deaths are loudly mourned while others are rendered invisible; why some perpetrators enjoy impunity while others are instantly demonized; and why truth itself has become a casualty in Nigeria's ethno-religious conflicts.

For God and History is written from a Muslim perspective, but it is not written against coexistence. On the contrary, it is anchored in the Islamic ethical imperative of justice in speech and fairness in judgment, even in the presence of hostility. It insists that peace built on lies is fragile, and unity sustained by historical falsification is an illusion. Genuine reconciliation requires intellectual honesty, moral courage, and a willingness to confront inconvenient facts.

This book is therefore offered not as a final word, but as a necessary one. It is an appeal to scholars, policymakers, journalists, religious leaders, and ordinary citizens to reconsider what they think they know about Nigeria's conflicts. It is a call to distinguish advocacy from propaganda, compassion from manipulation, and faith from fanaticism. Above all, it is a testimony, rendered in trust, to God, before whom truth cannot be hidden, and to history, which will ultimately judge the choices we made when falsehood was loud and truth was costly.

If this book unsettles, it has succeeded. If it provokes reflection rather than reflexive denial, it has served its purpose. And if it contributes, even modestly, to restoring balance, justice, and honesty to the discourse on religion and violence in Nigeria, then it will have fulfilled its obligation, for God and for history.

Malam Adamu Abdullahi Sokoto

Introduction

There is no other country quite like Nigeria in the world. It possesses distinctive demographic and socio-political features that make it unique among all sovereign nation-states. According to the United Nations' World Population Prospects, Nigeria's population was approximately 232 million in 2024,⁵ and 236 million according to the World Factbook, making it the most populous country in Africa.⁶ Nigeria is also considered one of the few countries in the world where very large Muslim and Christian populations coexist in such closely matched proportions.⁷ While both religious communities are substantially large, neither can validly be described as a minority in contrast to the other.

Although there has been ongoing debate regarding the exact percentages of adherents in each group, reputable sources have consistently reported that the Muslim population outnumbers the Christian population over the years. The most recently updated *World Factbook* (September 2025) of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), based on 2018 estimates, put the Muslim population in Nigeria at 53.5%, Christians 45.9% (with Catholics 10.6%, other Christians 35.3%) and Others at 0.6%.⁸ Earlier, in 2006, the Population Reference Bureau put the statistics, based on Nigeria's National Population Commission data for 2003, at 50.7%

⁵

See:

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=NG>

⁶ The World Factbook, *Nigeria*, available at: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/nigeria/#people-and-society>

⁷ Louisa Brooke-Holland, Philip Loft and Tim Robinson. *Religious minorities in Nigeria*, House of Common's Library, 2023, p. 2.

⁸ The World Factbook, *Nigeria*, available at: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/nigeria/#people-and-society>

(Muslims), 47.9% (Christians), and 1.4% (Others).⁹ The Pew Research Centre, in its 2010 report, put the Nigerian Muslim population at 52%, Christians 46%, and Others 2%.¹⁰ Given the consistently close proportions of Nigeria's Muslim and Christian populations, the country has been described by Canci and Odukoya,¹¹ who drew on the work of Paden (2008), as a potential fault line between the two religious communities. Nigeria is portrayed as both a “cleft country” and a “test case” for Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations thesis.

In the ethnic sphere, Nigeria can arguably be described as one of the most ethnically complex countries in the world. As Africa’s most populous nation, it hosts the highest number of ethnic groups on the continent. According to the World Factbook, Nigeria is home to more than 250 ethnic groups, with over 500 indigenous languages spoken.¹² Some sources suggest that Nigeria ranks among the most ethnically diverse countries globally.

Nigeria, therefore, is a remarkably complex historical, ethno-religious, and cultural mosaic. Indeed, it is, as rightly asserted by Kapuściński, though describing Africa (and Nigeria being the quintessential epitome of African identity

⁹ Population Reference Bureau. *In the News: The Nigerian Census*, 2006. Available at: <https://www.prb.org/resources/in-the-news-the-nigerian-census/>

¹⁰ Pew Research Centre, *Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2010, p. 20.

¹¹ Çancı, Haldun, and Opeyemi Adedoyin Odukoya. “Ethnic and Religious Crises in Nigeria: A Specific Analysis upon Identities (1999–2013).” *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2016, p. 7.

¹² The World Factbook, *Nigeria*, available at: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/nigeria/#people-and-society>

and race), "a veritable ocean, a separate planet, a varied, immensely rich cosmos."¹³ This being the case, not surprisingly, the challenge of national unity and integration has been present since the birth of Nigeria in 1914 with the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates. This was a colonial creation that brought together over 380 different communities, races and ethnic nationalities that hitherto shared no common history, worldview, language, and culture.

This union has been passing through episodes of serious stress and tension in its more than a century of existence, sometimes under threat to its unity. There was the civil war in the late 1960s, and before it and after, numerous other violent conflicts have also occurred. In recent years, tension across the different socio-cultural, ethno-religious, and politico-economic fault lines has been strongly aggravated by hate speech, which has contributed to violent conflicts, mostly between Christians and Muslims, being recurrent and highly destructive in Nigeria. The destruction of property worth billions of naira and the loss of thousands of lives in the last three and a half decades has been significant.

With the failure of successive regimes to muster the necessary political will and deploy the constitutional mandate and authority to enforce the rule of law, to hold accountable the masterminds and perpetrators of hate speech and violence, and with rampant extrajudicial killings, a culture of impunity has become entrenched, and the risk of state breakdown remains serious. But what seems to cast a spell of doom is the growing distrust and relational crisis among citizens. Mutual mistrust, suspicion and hate have become widespread. Consequently, there has been a

¹³ Kapuściński, Ryszard. *The Shadow of the Sun: My African Life*. Translated by Klara Glowczewska, Vintage Books, 2001.

significant increase in intolerance and mutual hostilities and the emergence of numerous centrifugal forces in the country.

In recent years, obviously as a result of the emergence of a Muslim President in 2015, a new dimension has been added to the prevailing atmosphere of uncertainty and distrust. Some Christians have, in some instances, concocted hate speech, campaigns of hostility and Islamophobic propaganda, which have heightened tension and fear more than at many other times in Nigeria's history. Although, for certain peri-colonial and post-colonial historical reasons, the Christians have been prevalently dominant in the civil service, all the security organizations, and all professional bodies, the fact of the Muslim numerical strength, which they vehemently and overtly deny, despite their internal belief, has continued to intimidate them, thereby always pretentiously crying marginalization by Muslims with no empirical evidence to prove it.

Beyond the recurrent unfounded claims of marginalization, the Christians in Nigeria, across generations and educational levels, both clergy and laity, have promoted the allegations of a planned Islamization of Nigeria, as a vehicle for their concerns, biases, and objections toward Islam and Muslims. Indeed, this narrative, despite the lack of any supporting evidence, has sometimes served both to heighten ethnic-religious tension locally and to attract international sympathy, donations, and diplomatic backing.

With significant media amplification, selective academic commentary, and numerous publications, the malicious, vilifying and Islamophobic narratives advanced by certain Nigerian Christian groups have become the dominant narrative. These frequent and aggressive campaigns to

portray and demonize Islam and Muslims in a uniformly negative light have recently become deeply concerning in their intensity to the extent of taking them beyond the shores of Nigeria. Delegations have engaged international legislative bodies such as the U.S. Congress and the British Parliament to advocate, create and galvanize a global Judeo-Christian alliance and aggression against Muslims in Nigeria. For example, on 13th July 2021, Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah made a presentation to the U.S. Congress. In that presentation,¹⁴ the Bishop not only appeared to be a person that loves and cherishes controversies but also maintained an unworthy record for himself as a malicious, mischievous and wicked bigot at that.

More recently, on March 12, 2025, Bishop Wilfred Chikpa Anagbe of the Diocese of Makurdi testified before the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa during a hearing titled “Conflict and Persecution in Nigeria: The Case for a CPC Designation.” In his testimony, Bishop Anagbe alleged “an organized, systematic, and brutal cleansing of Christians,” particularly in Benue State. His unfounded claims were supported by Tony Perkins, a former commissioner on the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), who claimed that Christians are the primary targets of terrorism in Nigeria, facing murder, rape, kidnapping, and intimidation.¹⁵ Following the hearing, several U.S. lawmakers condemned the Nigerian government for what they referred to as its failure to protect Christian communities from escalating violence. They cited

¹⁴ Available at <https://www.thecable.ng/full-text-what-kukah-told-us-congress-committee>

¹⁵

https://chris-smith.house.gov/uploadedfiles/testimony_of_frc_president_tony_perkins_for_march_12_2025_us_house_hearing_on_nigeria.pdf

a 2024 report by the Observatory for Religious Freedom in Africa (ORFA), which alleged that Nigeria accounted for 90% of all Christians killed globally in recent years. This led to the approval of measures urging President Donald Trump to designate Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) and consider sanctions.¹⁶ Earlier, on January 30, 2024, Bishop Anagbe had addressed a breakfast meeting on Capitol Hill organized by Aid to the Church in Need, during which he alleged genocidal violence against Christians in Nigeria.¹⁷

Similarly, on October 2, 2025, a group of 20 Members of the European Parliament (ECR Group) submitted a formal written question to the European Commission titled “Persecution of Christians in Nigeria” (E-003845/2025). In their statement, they alleged that Nigeria is currently the country most affected in the world by violence against Christians. They claimed that nearly 17,000 Christians had been killed between 2019 and 2023, and that more than 7,000 deaths were recorded in the first seven months of 2025. They asked the Commission what specific measures were being taken to protect Christian communities and promote religious freedom in Nigeria.¹⁸

¹⁶International Christian Concern. U.S. Congress Moves to Sanction Nigeria Over Rising Christian Persecution. See: <https://persecution.org/2025/03/17/u-s-congress-moves-to-sanction-nigeria-over-rising-christian-persecution/>

¹⁷ ACI Africa report, “Is the Persecution in Nigeria a Christian Genocide? This Bishop Says ‘yes’.” (31 January 2024). Available at: <https://www.aciafrica.org/news/10148/is-the-persecution-in-nigeria-a-christian-genocide-this-bishop-says-yes>

¹⁸ European Parliament. Persecution of Christians in Nigeria. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-10-2025-003845_EN.html

Against the backdrop of the multifaceted harm done by the falsehoods propagated by these belligerent Christians, which significantly contribute to increased intolerance, hostilities, and violence in Nigeria, and for the purpose of informing and educating the world about the truth of the happenings in Nigeria, for the sake of clarity and historical record, and indeed for *God and History*, we, members of a concerned Muslim advocacy network, made this effort to document and counter the narratives that we believe misrepresent Nigeria's religious and security dynamics.

We have been inspired and also motivated to write this piece by several verses of the Glorious Qur'an, some of which include verse 81 of Chapter 17 (al-Isrā') that reads: "*And proclaim: 'The Truth has come, and falsehood has vanished. Surely falsehood is ever bound to vanish.'*" And verse 18 of Chapter 21 (al-Anbiyā') that also reads, "*Nay, We hurl the Truth at falsehood so that the Truth crushes falsehood, and lo! It vanishes. Woe to you for what you utter!*"

In doing this, we are guided by the teachings of Islam on committing to the principles of truth, justice, and fairness in speech and writing. By the Grace of God, we will not write anything except that which is fair and truthful. Our intention is to promote peace, and harmonious coexistence, and it is our firm belief that only with truth, and not with falsehood or mischief, can peace be promoted, for as it is said, it is the truth that shall set us free. Free indeed, from the yokes and clutches of diabolic campaigns of hate and bigotry that often lead to violence and bloodshed.

The Qur'an has charged us to say the truth even if it were against ourselves. It says in verse 152 of Chapter 6 (al-An'ām), "*When you speak, be just, even though it*

concerns a near of kin.” A similar injunction was made in verse 8 of Chapter 5 (al-Mā’idah) where Allah says, “Believers! Be upright, bearers of witness for Allah, and do not let the enmity of any people move you to deviate from justice. Act justly, that is nearer to God-fearing. And fear Allah. Surely Allah is well aware of what you do.” And in verse 119 of Chapter 9 (al-Tawbah), Allah says, “Believers! Have fear of Allah and stand with those that are truthful.”

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has also enjoined us to say only that which is good, truthful, and harmless. He says, *“Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should say only that which is good (truthful, honest, fair, decorous) or keep mute.”*¹⁹ In the light of this, we are committed to the principle of promoting peace, harmony, mutual respect, and understanding.

In the spirit of harmonious coexistence and for the sake of the unity of Nigeria, Muslims have demonstrated greater restraint, clemency and tolerance in compliance with the teachings of Islam on peace and tolerance. As a matter of fact, Muslims have made significant sacrifices for the purpose of national unity and integration. Right from the first decade of our independence as a sovereign nation, Muslim leaders were assassinated in January 1966 by a group of some wicked elements, most of whom were Christians of South-Eastern extraction in the Nigerian Army. In this regard, the Christians were the first to have committed aggression against Muslims in the history of post-colonial Nigeria. Since then, the Muslims in Nigeria have experienced repeated, intermittent hostilities committed by Christian actors, some of which were of genocidal and ethnic cleansing magnitude.

¹⁹ Reported by Bukhārī (6018) and Muslim (47) on the authority of Abū Hurayrah.

As a result of the combined effect of failures by successive governments to hold perpetrators accountable, together with sustained media campaigns by some Christian-dominated outlets against Muslims, the truth *is* being turned on its head and history is being distorted. The Christians have developed a massive machinery of propaganda and have been unrelenting in fabricating lies throughout in order to malign Muslims and put them on the defensive. The Christians have become very desperate in misinforming the world about the true situation in Nigeria.

On 30th October 2020, one Reverend Father Godfrey Igwebuike Onah of the Catholic Diocese of Nsukka delivered a venomous and inciting sermon full of hate speech and lies that instigated Christian youths to go and burn the Central Mosque of Nsukka and one other mosque in the town.²⁰ Similarly, the statement of Apostle Sulaiman on 22 January 2017 before a congregation in a church that, “*wherever you see a Fulani man just kill him*” went viral on social media²¹ and was very much known in the public domain (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mwFCwpVeHwI>).

It is, therefore, necessary to unravel the truth that history may be kind and pitiful to us, as was once aptly and insightfully stated by the frontline anti-colonial,

²⁰ Daily Post. Enugu Bishop Godfrey Onah: Pressure mounts on DSS. Published on November 6, 2020. Available at: <https://dailypost.ng/2020/11/06/enugu-bishop-godfrey-onah-pressure-mounts-on-dss/>

²¹ International Business Times. Who is Apostle Johnson Suleman? Nigerian preacher calls for violence against Muslim Fulani herders. Available at: <https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/who-apostle-johnson-suleman-nigerian-preacher-calls-violence-against-muslim-fulani-herders-1606797>

anti-apartheid intellectual, social philosopher and writer, Franz Fanon that “the future will have no pity for those men who, possessing the exceptional privilege of being able to speak words of truth to their oppressors have instead taken refuge in an attitude of passivity, of mute indifference and sometimes of cold complicity.”²² It is also necessary to establish who the real, primary and recalcitrant aggressor is. This is a burden and a trust that must be discharged for the sake of history, for the sake of our dear land, for the sake of generations yet unborn, and indeed for the sake of God.

²² Fanon, Frantz. *Toward the African Revolution*. Quoted in “Zimbabwe: The Prophetic Voice of Frantz Fanon,” *Thinking Faith: The Online Journal of the Jesuits in Britain*, 23 June 2008, https://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/20080623_1.htm

Debunking the Fallacy of Christian Genocide in Nigeria through Data and Evidence

Recently, some U.S. legislators and Christian activists claimed that Christians in Nigeria are being killed in their thousands by Muslims, and that they are being targeted for genocide, citing falsified statistics to support these assertions. However, available evidence suggests that this claim is not accurate. Nigeria is indeed facing a severe security crisis, with violence increasing almost daily. The activities of bandits, primarily in the Northwest, have caused the deaths of tens of thousands of people in Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto, Kebbi, Niger, and Kaduna states over the past decade. These states have majority-Muslim populations. Likewise, the insurgent activities of Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the Northeast have led to thousands of deaths, the majority of victims being Muslims. In many of these incidents, mosques have been attacked and dozens of people have been killed while praying. Markets, motor parks, schools, highways, and other public spaces have also been attacked and destroyed, resulting in mass casualties, displacement, and large-scale kidnappings, including the kidnapping of primary school pupils. It is, therefore, illogical to claim that while these heinous crimes are ongoing in states with over 80 percent Muslim populations, the victims are predominantly Christians.

In many communities in Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto, Niger, and Birnin Gwari of Kaduna State, residents have been prevented from farming or pursuing their livelihoods. Many schools remain closed due to fears of kidnapping. In some parts of Zamfara and Katsina, communities have reportedly surrendered to bandit kingpins, working under them as

forced labourers to avoid killings, abductions, and sexual violence. Given these realities, it is impossible to sustain the claim that Christians are being systematically killed or targeted for genocide. The organized crime of banditry and the insurgent activities of Boko Haram and ISWAP do not discriminate by religion. Crime is crime, regardless of the perpetrator's or victim's faith. Even in the North-Central region, it is misleading to claim that more Christians are killed than Muslims in Plateau, Benue, and Nasarawa states, or that all insurgent and bandit attacks are targeted only at Christians or committed solely by Muslims. Indeed, many of those arrested and convicted for insurgent or banditry attacks in Plateau and Benue states have been Christians, though perpetrators often cut across both faiths. Recently, the governor of Anambra State, Chukwuma Charles Soludo, publicly confirmed that 99.99% of kidnappers and other criminals arrested in the state since he assumed office in 2022 have been Igbo people; none was a Fulani herdsman. This underscores the fact that criminality in Nigeria transcends ethnicity and religion.²³

Available statistics from credible sources also show that the claim of genocide against Christians in Nigeria is not supported by evidence. According to a report by Global Rights published by Vanguard News on May 27, 2022, at least 14,641 killings occurred in Nigeria between January 2019 and December 2021, with 6,895 people killed in 2021 alone, and the Northwest accounting for the highest number of deaths. The report further documented that mass abductions, particularly of students, had become a persistent trend, with over 1,000 students kidnapped in 2021, especially in Niger, Zamfara, Kaduna, Kebbi, and Katsina

²³ <https://guardian.ng/news/nigeria/metro/99-99-of-kidnappers-arrested-in-anambra-since-2022-are-igbo-soludo/>

states.²⁴ A more recent report by The Point NG, citing Amnesty International and published on May 30, 2025, revealed that at least 10,217 people were killed between 2023 and 2025 in Benue, Edo, Katsina, Kebbi, Plateau, Sokoto, and Zamfara states.²⁵ Similarly, The Guardian Nigeria of March 18, 2025, reported data from the Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS) indicating that Boko Haram and ISWAP were responsible for 66 percent of all violent deaths in Nigeria in 2024.²⁶ These findings confirm that the epicenters of violence are in the predominantly Muslim Northwest and Northeast, rather than in Christian-majority areas.

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) also released a shocking figure in December 2024 on the number of deaths from insecurity in Nigeria.²⁷ According to data reported by Anadolu Agency on December 19, 2024, between May 2023 and April 2024, the country recorded 614,937 deaths attributed to insecurity. Of these, the Northwest recorded 206,030 deaths, and the Northeast 188,992, together accounting for 64 percent of the national total.²⁸ Since the activities of Boko Haram, ISWAP, and bandits are concentrated in the Northwest and Northeast, regions with overwhelming Muslim majorities, it is mathematically implausible that Christians form most of the victims. Even if some Christians are among the casualties, it would be

²⁴ <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/05/insecurity-6895-persons-killed-in-2021-report/>

²⁵ <https://www.thepointng.com/insecurity-10217-people-killed-by-bandits-in-two-years-amnesty-international/>

²⁶ <https://guardian.ng/news/boko-haram-responsible-for-66-of-violent-deaths-in-nigeria-report/>

²⁷ See: <https://dailytrust.com/nbs-data-on-banditry-is-a-wake-up-call/>

²⁸ <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/data-shows-614-937-victims-killed-in-nigeria-from-insecurity-in-1-year/3429502>

misleading to generalize that Christians are the main targets in those regions.

Several Nigerian commentators, including Christians, have also refuted the genocide narrative. On September 28, 2025, public commentator and political analyst Reno Omokri wrote on his verified X (formerly Twitter) account an article titled “Bill Maher and Radio Genoa: There Was No Massacre of 500,000 Christians by Muslims in Nigeria Last Year or Any Other Year.” He denounced the false propaganda spread by Radio Genoa and corrected misleading statements by American commentator Bill Maher, who had claimed that Muslims were systematically exterminating Christians in Nigeria. Omokri acknowledged that Nigeria faces grave insecurity challenges affecting all citizens, but insisted that more Muslims have been killed than Christians. He cited data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) project showing that between 2010 and 2023, 13,485 people were killed in attacks, with the vast majority being Muslims.²⁹ Similarly, former Aviation Minister Femi Fani-Kayode dismissed the claim that Nigeria is experiencing a systemic killing of Christians, affirming instead that the country is witnessing a general wave of violence that affects both Muslims and Christians.³⁰ He cautioned against the spread of disinformation by foreign commentators who seek to paint Nigeria as a country engaged in Christian genocide, noting that such narratives deepen division and undermine national unity.³¹ He further asserted that the claim is a form of

²⁹ <https://x.com/renoomokri/status/1972692256223064559>

³⁰ <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/825842-christian-genocide-and-the-conspiracy-against-nigeria-by-femi-fani-kayode.html>

³¹ <https://dailytrust.com/fani-kayode-tackles-american-over-anti-christian-genocide-claim/>

disinformation being promoted by the Jewish-controlled media in America as payback for Nigeria's position against the genocide in Gaza.³²

The misinformation and disinformation being circulated about the actual victims of insecurity in Nigeria often originate from organizations such as the Observatory for Religious Freedom in Africa (ORFA) and Intersociety, which have been criticized for selective data collection focusing mainly on Christian-majority areas like Benue, Plateau, and southern Kaduna. These groups often overlook that violence in these areas is usually mutual, involving both Christian and Muslim communities, and is rooted more in farmer-herder conflicts, land disputes, and political rivalries than in religion. It is therefore misleading to extrapolate data from those localized conflicts to claim that Muslims are aggressors nationwide or that Christians are victims of a systematic genocide.

In conclusion, the data and evidence from Amnesty International, the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, Global Rights, ACLED, and the National Bureau of Statistics show that Nigeria's insecurity crisis is national, complex, and indiscriminate, not targeted exclusively at any one religion. Both Muslims and Christians have suffered immense losses in lives, property, and livelihoods. Claims of a Christian genocide in Nigeria, therefore, are not only unfounded but mischievous.

³² https://punchng.com/fani-kayode-tinubus-aide-refute-bill-mahers-christian-genocide-claims/#google_vignette

Trajectory of Christian Aggressions against Muslims in Nigeria

Truth, as is said in philosophy, is the aim of belief while falsity is a fault. Truth, therefore, is essential in life; we need it not only to survive but also to thrive.³³ Falsehood flourishes in the absence of truth, and when the bearers of truth choose to remain silent, falsehood not only thrives but also takes the place of truth. This situation reflects the reality of conflicts, violence, and bloodshed in Nigeria.

For over three decades, our Christian counterparts in Nigeria have flooded the world with a deluge of falsehood regarding the issue of the conflicts and violence that have been happening in the country, especially involving Muslims and Christians since the 1980s. It is deeply concerning that an entire faith community, except for very few seekers of truth, reasonable voices, and discerning, objective minds, choose to cherish, live on, and propagate falsehood, misinformation, and inaccuracies. With no exception, the leaders and followers, journalists and politicians, academics and technocrats, intelligentsia and laymen of the Christian community have convinced themselves, albeit deceitfully, inconsistently, and misleadingly, that the narrative they peddle, namely that they are being persecuted and significantly harmed by Muslims, is the truth about the conflicts and violence in Nigeria. Even more absurd are the assertions they often make about marginalization, jihad, and Islamization in a country where, more often than not, positions of power and authority and opportunities of all sorts are favorably tilted towards Christianity. Even more appalling and disheartening is that persons who are supposed to be statesmen in their own right, by virtue of the

³³ Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/truth-philosophy-and-logic>

positions they have held or are holding in the country, choose to betray their conscience and proclaim, promote, and propagate such inaccuracies and falsehoods.

Not long ago, the Nigerian Christian Elders Forum, under the leadership of General T.Y. Danjuma (Rtd.), shamelessly packaged and presented such lies to the UK Parliament in a letter/report dated June 3, 2020, as reported by Vanguard newspaper on Wednesday, October 28, 2020. Among many other lies and mischief, Danjuma and his co-travellers asserted in the letter that Buhari was pursuing a *jihad* or Islamization agenda in Nigeria. How that claim could be true, or at least, how that assertion would not be ridiculous, irrational, and laughable given that Buhari's Vice President was an evangelical, unrepentant, and unpretentious Pentecostal pastor, remains a question that begs for answers from General Danjuma and his ilk.

The United Kingdom and the United States of America have separately and often jointly proclaimed themselves as the paragons of virtue and epitomes of justice, fairness, and humaneness, and the flagbearers of truth and objectivity, at least so we think, due to our intellectual and psychological servitude to them as our colonial masters and prefects of democracy, respectively. It is, however, both stupefying and dreadful that, either because such grandstanding and virtuous disposition are merely performative or because the two self-appointed patrons of human rights and police officers of democracy share the same Islamophobic sentiments and prejudices with Nigerian Christians, they also proclaimed and re-echoed, at different times, those lies that were presented to them.

In this section, an attempt has been made to establish, with proven facts and logical arguments, that all through the three

and a half decades of the ethno-religious crises in Nigeria, Christians have always been the aggressors. At various instances, they have orchestrated, masterminded, and carried out violent assaults on Muslim communities in remote areas where they have some level of numerical advantage. This assertion is proven in the following paragraphs.

The Assassination of Northern Muslim Leaders

One of the clearest early demonstrations of Christian aggression against Muslims in Nigeria occurred less than a decade after independence, and it remains a critical reference point in understanding the roots of religious intolerance, hatred, and political violence in the country. As early as January 1966, a pattern of targeted killings and brutal political assassinations was established through a military coup that set a dangerous precedent for Nigeria's future.

The January 1966 coup, widely known as the January Coup, was planned and executed by a group of mainly Igbo Christian military officers from the Eastern Region. Key figures among the plotters included Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna, Major D. Okafor, Major C. I. Anuforo, and others. Their actions led to the assassination of prominent Northern political and military leaders, most of whom were Muslims, thereby creating a deep and lasting ethnic and religious divide in the country.

Among those killed were Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Nigeria's first Prime Minister; Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto and Premier of Northern Nigeria; Brigadier Zakariya Maimalari, the most senior Northern Muslim military officer; and Colonel Kur

Mohammed. These assassinations, as widely documented by historians and scholars, marked the beginning of a deliberate attempt to reshape Nigeria's political and military power structure, intensifying both ethnic and religious tensions.³⁴

Although the coup plotters claimed that their actions were motivated by opposition to corruption and maladministration, historical evidence has largely discredited this justification. The accusations against the Northern Muslim leadership were rooted more in suspicion, prejudice, and hostility than in verifiable facts. Many critics have since argued that allegations of corruption merely served as a smokescreen for deeper ethnic and religious power struggles.

A particularly telling aspect of the coup was its selective nature. While Muslim politicians and officers from Northern Nigeria were systematically targeted and killed, no Christian political leader from either the North or the South was assassinated, with the sole exception of Chief Samuel Akintola of the South-West, who was killed alongside Tafawa Balewa and the Sardauna. This pattern was not accidental; it reflected a carefully planned operation aimed at eliminating key Muslim leaders from positions of influence.

The overarching objective was to weaken, intimidate, and politically cripple the Muslim community, especially in Northern Nigeria, and to assert dominance over the

³⁴ Falola, Toyin, and Matthew M. Heaton. *A History of Nigeria*. Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 172-174; Kirk-Greene, A.H.M. *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria: A Documentary Sourcebook 1966-1970*. Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 34-40.

country's political and military institutions. Consequently, attempts to explain or justify the coup by blaming Muslim politicians in the North are deliberate, misleading, and fundamentally flawed. If corruption or economic mismanagement had been the true motivation, it is evident that those most responsible for draining national resources were not concentrated in the Muslim North, which instead suffered the greatest human and political losses.

Subsequent events, particularly the Nigerian Civil War and later the Gideon Orkar coup attempt of 1991, further reinforced the perception that Islam and Muslims have repeatedly been treated as deliberate targets of hostility, often at the hands of Christian-dominated power blocs. These developments challenge the narrative of Christian victimhood and instead reveal a longstanding pattern of political marginalisation and religious exclusion directed at Muslims in Nigeria.

In this light, the January 1966 coup stands as a defining moment in Nigeria's history because it marked the beginning of military intervention in politics. It also sowed the first seeds of religious discord, pioneered political killings, and established a culture of intolerance and violence whose consequences continue to shape the nation's religious and political landscape.

Provocative Preaching and Hate Speeches by Christians

The first remarkable ethno-religious crisis in Nigeria was the Kafanchan crisis of 1987. Not surprisingly, it was caused by provocative and hateful preaching delivered by Reverend Abubakar Bako on the premises of the Kaduna State College of Education, Kafanchan. When some Muslim students confronted him verbally to seek an explanation for his

provocative preaching, they were physically assaulted by the Christians, who thereafter went berserk, attacking Muslims within the college campus and in the town. Scores of Muslims were killed, including *Alarammomi* (Qur'anic memorizers) and young Qur'anic school pupils residing around Gidan Waya and Kafanchan.³⁵ Since then, Rev. Bako has been wanted by security agents and remains at large to this day.³⁶

This incident marked a significant turning point in Nigeria's history, highlighting the role of provocative preaching and hate speech in inciting religious violence. It is therefore pertinent to point out here that, in addition to starting physical violence and aggression, Christians have also been the pacesetters of hate speech and hostile preaching, which have been the principal factors responsible for armed conflicts and bloodshed in Nigeria.

Indictment, Arrests, Prosecution and Conviction of Christian Masterminds and Ring Leaders

The assassination of Muslim leaders in the January 1966 coup and the hate preaching of Reverend Bako that ignited the 1987 crisis in Kafanchan mentioned above are two incidents that were presented to demonstrate the fact that Christians were the first aggressors in the history of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. The same fact applies to almost all crises that have kept recurring in the country to the present day. These include Numan, Tingno and Waduku (1988), Zangon-Kataf crises (February and May 1992), Tafawa Balewa crises (1991, 1995, 2001, and 2011),

³⁵Isyaku, B. *The Kafanchan Carnage*, 3rd edition, Even Development Projects, Kaduna, 1991, pp. 22-31.

³⁶ <https://sociallogia.wordpress.com/2020/08/19/chronological-order-of-southern-kaduna-crisis/>

Kafanchan crises (recurring incessantly for many years from 1987), Bambam in Gombe State (2000), Zonkwa (2011), Plateau (2001, 2004, 2008, etc.), Mambila (2016, 2017, 2018), etc., to mention just a few.

It would be boring to narrate the details of the stories of each and every one of the above incidents to establish the fact that they were all premeditated, orchestrated, masterminded, and executed by Christians against their Muslim neighbors. Rather than presenting long descriptions about the circumstances of those conflicts, it would be rational to refer to simple logic associated with some facts regarding them that also cannot be contradicted. In the first decade of the emergence of the reprehensible phenomenon of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria (1987–1997) both states and federal governments used to appoint judicial commissions of inquiry and tribunals. When it became a recurrent phenomenon, happening frequently, unabatingly, and incessantly, with reprisals and counter-reprisals in chains, the governments ceased appointing judicial panels. It has now become somehow intractable and continuous; consequently, the hostile ethnic and faith communities, Hausa-Fulani versus ethnic minorities, and Muslims versus Christians, keep on pointing accusing fingers at one another over who is the aggressor. In this situation, it becomes necessary to ascertain who the first aggressor was through reference to the findings of the judicial commissions of inquiry appointed at the initial stages of the disturbances. It is striking to note that all the judicial commissions of inquiry appointed in those years indicted the Christian communities in the crisis-ridden areas.

The Babalakin Judicial Commission of Inquiry appointed by the Military Head of State, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, on the Tafawa Balewa Crisis of 1991 for

example, indicted the Sayawa Christians for orchestrating and perpetrating the disturbances which led to the killing of 166 Muslims, burning of about 60% of their houses and the entire market of the town. The Commission, in its recommendation, indicted the Local Government Council under the chairmanship of a Sayawa Christian man, Mr. Habila Bako Lumana, of being culpable by conniving with his kinsmen to unleash massacre and terror against the Hausa-Fulani Muslim community in Tafawa Balewa. The Commission, therefore, recommended that the chairman be removed and his Council be proscribed. This recommendation was upheld by the White Paper Committee on the crisis and was implemented by the Bauchi State Government of the time. Furthermore, the Commission also recommended the arrest and trial of 23 Sayawa Christians who were also found guilty of committing arson and killings. One of them was Mr. Kyauta (alias Kyankyaso) who was also convicted of the murder of the District Head of Lere, Malam Abubakar Bawa, in 1977 in Tafawa Balewa. He had just come out of prison after serving his prison sentence when he played the role of ring leader in the 1991 pogrom. All the 23 Sayawa terrorists were arrested and prosecuted in July 1993.

In the case of the Zangon Kataf crises of both February and May, 1992, thousands of people were killed. In the February 1992 disturbance, 95 persons, mostly Hausa-Fulani, were killed, 252 others were injured, and 133 houses and 26 farmlands destroyed. The crisis of May 1992 was more catastrophic because the death toll was monumentally higher and unprecedented.³⁷ The preliminary official figures put the number of persons killed (mostly Hausa-Fulani) at 188 (*New Nigerian*, 20 July 1992). Later, the Hausa-Fulani

³⁷Suberu, R. T. *Ethnic Minority Conflicts and Governance in Nigeria*, IFRA-Nigeria, 1996, pp. 48-65.

community in Zangon Kataf compiled a report that included names of some 1,528 members of the community who were reportedly killed in the disturbances (*The News*, 7 June 1993:20).

A Judicial Commission of Inquiry was also appointed, headed by Justice Rahila Cudjoe. It is instructive to note that this Judicial Commission of Inquiry, headed by a Christian, indicted only the Kataf Christians and recommended that they should be arrested and prosecuted. The Federal Government set up two Civil Disturbance Special Tribunals consecutively and both were headed by Christians, Justice Okadigbo and Justice Emmanuel Adegbite respectively. A total of 14 prominent Kataf leaders including Major-General Zamani Lekwot, a former Military Governor and ambassador, were charged with complicity in and masterminding of the disturbances. In September 1992 all the 14 persons were sentenced to death by the two different Tribunals including the same Zamani Lekwot. The Federal Government under the leadership of the Military Head of State, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, unfortunately, commuted the death sentences to five years imprisonment. It is important to note here that the heads of the Judicial Commissions of Inquiry that first found these Kataf leaders guilty of orchestrating and executing the arson and massacre of Hausa-Fulani Muslims and the two Tribunals that sentenced them to death were all Christians. They could not have been unfair and unjust to their fellow Christians. Nothing could be proof and affirmation of the fact that Christians have been the first and all-time aggressors in all the ethno-religious conflicts taking place in Nigeria.

In the case of Bambam in Gombe State, a simple attempt by Muslims to comply with the Shari'ah among themselves attracted aggression by Christians that led to the killing of

16 Muslims. A confirmation of the fact that Christians were the aggressors was the arrest and prosecution of Reverend Joseph Labiluwa and others.

The Justice Babalakin Commission Report of 1991 on Tafawa Balewa, the Justice Rahila Cudjoe Report of 1992 on Zangon Kataf and the reports of the two Civil Disturbances Special Tribunals are all in the public domain. They all indicted the Christians, recommended their arrests and prosecution, and secured their convictions. These could not have been accidental or mere coincidence. They only prove beyond reasonable doubt that Christians have been consistently wicked and full of hate for their Muslim neighbors and are primarily and principally responsible for all the ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria that have caused the death of thousands of people, destruction of property worth billions of Naira and displacement and wiping away of hundreds of Muslim communities in Southern Kaduna, Plateau, Bauchi, Adamawa, Nasarawa and Taraba states over a period of nearly four decades from Kasuwan Magani in 1981 to the time of this write-up (November 2025).

Christians as the Pioneers in Abduction/Kidnap of Women and Girls

Kidnapping and abduction under whatever guise is a criminal act, wicked, evil, and condemnable. It becomes all the more horrible if the kidnapping involves women and teenage girls as in the case of the kidnapping of Chibok and Dapchi girls in 2014 and 2018, respectively. Muslims have always condemned the doctrines and every activity of Boko Haram. Muslim scholars and leaders have been consistent in explaining that Boko Haram and all its atrocious activities are at variance with Islam. There was consensus among the Muslim leaders in condemning the kidnapping of schoolgirls by Boko Haram. Without prejudice to the

assertions made above, indeed without any intent to justify or in any way legitimize Boko Haram's kidnapping of the Chibok and Dapchi girls; the truth must be told that it was not Boko Haram that first started to kidnap women and girls but Christians.

Exactly ten years before the Boko Haram kidnapping of the Chibok girls, Christians abducted and kidnapped over two dozen Muslim women and girls in Plateau State in 2004. The ethno-religious crisis in Yelwan Shendam in 2004 in Plateau State left tens of Muslims killed and their property worth billions of naira was destroyed and looted. One of the most condemnable and evil things that happened was the kidnapping of hundreds of Muslim women and girls by the ethnic Yergam/Tarok Christians.³⁸ At the time of writing this piece, there has not been any official announcement about the rescue or whereabouts of these women. In fact, nobody cares or talks about them.

³⁸ Human Rights Watch. *Revenge in the Name of Religion: The Cycle of Violence in Plateau and Kano States*, 2005. Vol. 17, No. 8, p. 40.

Ethno-Religious Crises in North-Central and North-Eastern Nigeria

Ethno-Religious conflicts and communal clashes have become a recurrent phenomenon, most especially in the North-Central and North-Eastern regions. These, as earlier stated, began in the early 1980s with the first one that took place at Kasuwan Magani in Kaduna State. In 1981, the people of the Adara tribe in the then Kachia community leadership sought to uproot Hausa traders in order to take over the Kasuwan Magani market, by claiming that the land exclusively belonged to them and characterising the Hausa traders as “settlers”. In the process, they killed several Muslims and destroyed homes belonging to them.³⁹ Later, in 1986, a conflict that arose following a contest over the District Headship of Lere in Kuru Local Government Area led some Christians from the Kurama tribe, who rejected the candidature of a Muslim from the same tribe and instead preferred a Kurama Christian, to resort to violence. The violence resulted in the killing of tens of Muslims and the destruction of their properties.⁴⁰

These have continued unabated to the present day. Thousands of lives have been lost and multi-billion naira worth of property have been destroyed; tens of communities have been displaced, and indeed, several have been wiped out. We have, in the preceding section, in a general sense proven with facts and with rational and logical reasoning and arguments that all along the Christians have been the aggressors and the perpetrators of violence and bloodshed in Nigeria. In this section we intend to focus specifically on

³⁹ <https://intervention.ng/21133/>

⁴⁰ <https://sociallogia.wordpress.com/2020/08/19/chronological-order-of-southern-kaduna-crisis/>

the phenomenon of ethno-religious crises which has been the biggest threat to the corporate existence of Nigeria.

Common fault lines of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Northern Nigeria

From the first emergence of this phenomenon, the fault lines have remained consistently the same. They are usually and in most cases religious differences, ethnic differences, the settler/indigene divide, competing and sometimes opposing economic and political interests and manipulations. Whenever any such conflict occurs, there is usually debate as to whether it was religious, tribal, political, or economic. But the truth of the matter is that these fault lines always interface and interplay in such a way that it is impossible to single out just one factor as unilaterally responsible.

The phenomenon of ethno-religious conflict in the North-Central and North-East regions is certainly very intricate as much as it is complex. If this point is explicated, it becomes clear that at all times, whether it started as purely an ethnic dispute or purely a religious one, it would take an ethno-religious coloration. This is because the conflicts usually involve Hausa/Fulani on one hand, and the ethnic minorities on the other hand. While the former are always Muslims, the latter are mostly Christians. This divide runs through almost all other fault lines. The two communities have mostly aligned with differing or opposing political interests and parties throughout the two regions since independence. Therefore, a purely political dispute would automatically transform into an ethnic or religious conflict. The same thing applies in the case of the so-called indigene/settler divide.

The Hausa/Fulani even after originally founding, naming and establishing cities/towns/villages/communities (that

invariably turn out to be the most prosperous settlements in the region) at certain times when the ethnic minorities were on top of hills and in very remote and savage hamlets have always been mischievously called the settlers. This is the case with Jos, Kafanchan, Tafawa-Balewa, Zangon-Kataf, Yelwan-Shendam, Barikin Ladi, Dorowar Babuje, Kasuwan Magani, etc. In almost all the names mentioned above, the Hausa or Fulfulde element is pronounced, and there is no authoritative source that claims in any way, the existence of any name given to such towns or villages in the languages of the local ethnic minorities around them. Zango is clearly a Hausa word, whereas Tafawa-Balewa is a Fulfulde word that means, 'Huge Black Rock'. These do not only indicate that the two towns were originally founded by Hausa and Fulani respectively, but they falsify the tagging of the Hausa/Fulani as settlers. On several instances of the clashes, a dispute between two individuals who happen to belong to the two rival ethno-religious groups would degenerate into a whole-scale ethno-religious conflict.

Common, Persistent and Consistent Patterns in Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Northern Nigeria

We would not tire of reminding the reader that the primary objective of this write-up is to present the correct perspectives on the conflicts and violence that have bedeviled our country, thereby changing the narrative propagated by Christians. On this note, it can be said that sufficient points have been made in this regard in the preceding sections. Despite that fact, there is still, however, the need to present additional evidence and logical arguments for the purpose of proving that Christians have always been the orchestrators and perpetrators of violent aggressions against Muslims.

In this regard, we wish to present here another dimension to our assertion. This is the fact that throughout the history of this unfortunate phenomenon (the ethno-religious violence), regardless of the place and year of occurrence of any particular incident, there have remained certain common, persistent, and consistent patterns which further prove that the Christians have always been on the offensive side, orchestrating and carrying out violence against their innocent Muslim neighbors. These common patterns are presented below.

- 1) **The so-called indigenes always the aggressors while the so-called settlers always the victims:** In all instances of these conflicts the so-called indigenes have always been the aggressors. This fact has been proven beyond reasonable doubt. What is instructive here is the fact that this pattern remains common, persistent and consistent in all places and at all times. This is what happened in Kasuwar Magani in 1981; Kafanchan 1987, and all other subsequent ones there; Tingno and Waduku 1987; Tafawa-Balewa 1991, 1995, 2001, and 2011; Zangon-Kataf 1992 (a) and 1992 (b); Jos 2001, 2004 and 2008; Yelwan Shendam 2004; Zonkwa 2011; to mention just a few. Because the Hausa-Fulani Muslim communities have always been in the urban settlements of those localities, the Christian aggressors would always invite their tribesmen from the surrounding villages and hills, who would always converge and carry out violent assaults on the Muslims in the towns.
- 2) **One-way aggression:** Another common, persistent and consistent pattern in these ethno-religious conflicts which needs to be projected is the fact that for about four decades now, since the first occurrence of ethno-religious conflict in Northern Nigeria it has

always been one-way aggression, in the sense that, it always occurs in places where the Christian ethnic minority tribes have relative numerical advantage over the Hausa-Fulani and Kanuri Muslim communities within their localities. Conversely however, these minority tribes do live in predominantly Hausa-Fulani and Kanuri-dominated cities and towns like Kano, Zaria, Katsina, Sokoto, Maiduguri, Damaturu, Gusau, Bauchi, Gombe, Kebbi, Dutse, etc., but there has never been a time when the majority Muslim population premeditatedly assaulted or attacked them. Where anything like that occurred, it must have been a sort of reprisal for aggression meted out to their brethren in those ethnic minority enclaves, such as in 1987 when Muslims in Kaduna metropolis, Zaria, and Funtua saw the corpses of their relatives transported back to the cities for burial, because even burying the dead was an issue during the crisis.

This was what happened in Bauchi and Ningi in 1991 after Muslims were killed in Tafawa Balewa. This one-way pattern of aggression smacks of the kind of deep-seated hate and envy that these ethnic minority tribes harbor against the Hausa-Fulani and Kanuri Muslims, and it has been the factor that has always driven them to carry out armed assaults and attacks against their peace loving neighbors, the Muslims.

- 3) Pre-meditated, but always exploit a launch-pad or a trigger point:** Another pattern that characterizes ethno-religious crises in Northern Nigeria is that it has always been premeditated. Of the more than three dozen such conflicts, there is hardly any one that can be said to be accidental. The ethnic-minority tribes

had always nursed the ambition of chasing away the Hausa-Fulani Muslims from their so-called 'ancestral' domains. Across the entire North-Central region, settlements (towns and villages) originally founded and named by the Hausa-Fulani Muslims like Jos metropolis, Kafanchan, Bukuru, Tafawa-Balewa, Zangon -Kataf, Yelwan-Shendam and Kasuwan Magani happen to be the most prosperous and developed. This makes the ethnic minority tribes hatefully envious and they tend to believe that the Hausa-Fulani dominate them and that they would only progress and prosper by exterminating them. They would only therefore, wait for an opportunity, some immediate cause, to unleash their premeditated terror. It would therefore, be seen that in 1987 in Kafanchan, a Muslim female student's protest against the hateful and provocative preaching of Reverend Abubakar Bako would be the only reason for killing scores of Muslim Qur'anic memorisers and school pupils, passers-by and other innocent Muslims.

In Tafawa-Balewa in 1991 a fellow Muslim advising his fellow unsuspecting Fulani Muslim against buying pork *suya* from a Sayawa *suya* hawker would be the cause of burning Muslim houses on Saturday 20 April, 1991 and subsequently killing about two hundred Muslims two days later on 22 April, 1991. The same thing happened in 1995 in the same Tafawa-Balewa when Hausa-Fulani Muslims organized a reception to celebrate and honour one of their own -Malam Ibrahim Musa who was appointed as a Commissioner by the then Military Governor of Bauchi State. That simple, peaceful and joyful activity was protested by the Sayawa Christians and

would lead to the killings of several dozens of Muslims in the town, and its surrounding Muslim (mainly Fulani) villages and hamlets like Nafada, Barangel, Pamcipam, Karli, etc, which were all wiped away and never resettled since that year up to the time of writing this piece.

In Zangon-Kataf in 1992, the protest of Hausa-Fulani traders against relocation of market initiated by the Local Government Authority would be the cause of a pogrom and carnage that saw the involvement of people like General Zamani Lekwot. Hundreds of Hausa-Fulani Muslims were killed.

This has actually been the pattern that characterized almost all the ethno-religious crises in this part of the country. The point that needs to be noted therefore, is that all the immediate causes to most of these crises are very inconsequential. The remote causes which are primordial and deep-seated hate and prejudices are the actual significant factors responsible for the disturbances and indeed more important in understanding the inner dimensions of the bones of contention of the conflicts.

- 4) Masterminds, ring leaders, field actors/culprits are rarely punished:** This is another common, persistent pattern that has remained consistent in almost all the ethno-religious crises in Northern Nigeria and particularly in the most notorious flashpoints of the crises, namely Kafanchan, Tafawa Balewa, Jos/Plateau, Zangon Kataf and Zonkwa. Instructively noteworthy is that in all these places the ethnic minority tribes have variously and severally been indicted by competent judicial commissions of

inquiry and in some cases even convicted as was earlier factually stated here, but at no single time were the sanctioned penalties executed or carried out against the culprits. In other words, none of them was ever made to face the full wrath of the law.

This unfortunate failure by successive governments and regimes at both the federal and state levels was as a result of a failure of governance and lack of political will on one part and the dominance of Christians in the helm of affairs that are expected to ensure implementation of all the outcomes of the commissions of inquiry. Its evil consequence therefore has been that the criminals got emboldened; aggressors became more recalcitrant and more belligerent. They were never brought to book, and that led to the distortion of the facts in the public domain, about who has been the real aggressors. The typical examples are the farmlands of the people of Zangon Kataf, which the commissions of inquiry recommended to be returned to the rightful owners (Hausa-Fulanis) and clearly accepted by government as shown in the government white paper are still under the custody of the Atyap (Kataf) people.

The farmland and houses of over 400 Hausa-Fulani killed in Zonkwa in 2011, in Zangon Kataf Local Government is still in the hands of the perpetrators. The Mosque and the Islamiyyah school, built by one of their daughters, Hajiya Maryam Gidado Idris, burned down by the Christians in Samarun Katab, are now an eyesore because the Christians have refused to allow the Muslims to rebuild the center since then. Unfortunately, some of their tribesmen who were not so inclined to violence gradually and subconsciously

got influenced. Other failures associated with this are the fact that, in many instances, the casualties in these crises, were never officially declared, documented and compensated. The ultimate consequence of all these failures is what we are witnessing today; the country is fast drifting into anarchy.

5) Common outcomes, common fates, common destinies: So far, since the beginning of the phenomenon of ethno-religious crises in Northern Nigeria in the 1980s to the present moment, Muslims, especially of the Hausa-Fulani extraction, have experienced the same outcomes. They also have faced the same fate, having been the consistent and constant victims of almost all the aggressions. They have had the highest number of casualties, and they had variously been displaced and in some cases, their settlements completely and permanently eliminated. For the purpose of illustration, since 2011, the Muslims in Tafawa Balewa town have fled, and up to the time of writing, there has been no Azan (call to prayer), no Jumu'ah prayer, and no Eid prayer in the town. In fact, all the mosques in the town had been razed to the ground. Without fear of contradiction, we can assert that before 2011 more than a dozen Muslim villages around Tafawa Balewa had been completely wiped away and exterminated. These include Anguwan Rogo, Durum, Kocciyel, Karli, Nafada, Barangel, Pancipam, etc. All these were Fulani settlements around Tafawa-Balewa that were either exterminated in 1991 or 1995.

In Plateau State, the Muslims of Garkawa were driven out from the town for several years. More than half of the Muslims chased away from Yelwan

Shendam have not returned since 2004. Other places where only a few percentages of Muslims have been able to return over a period of 10 years up to the time of writing this piece include: Mabudi, Sabon Gida, Turaki, Dadinkowa, Magama, Faya/Fajul in Langtang South Local Government Area (LGA); Lalin, Tunkus, Piaping in Mikang LGA; Mile 8, Dis, and Fer in Pankshin LGA; and Kabwir in Kanke LGA.

In the same Plateau, there are many towns in which Muslims (Hausa-Fulani) were massively killed and communities were completely displaced just as there were towns and villages that were almost 100% Muslims where the Muslims were massacred and their settlements completely wiped out and are now history. These include: Jos South LGA: Sabon Gidan Kanar, Kuru Karama, Gero, Tim Tim, Kuru Babba, DogonaHauwa, Kuru Tasha, Kuru Trade Centre, Dorowa Bukuru, Anguldi, Tur Vom, Kaduna Vom, Passakai, Kalambaye, Dilimi, Maiyanga, Farin Lamba, Dogon Gaba; Barikin Ladi LGA: Heipang, Kassa, Sabon Gidan Foron, Dorowa Tsohuwa, Nafan, Yelwan Losel, Pandadi, Shalawa, Barikin Bako, Bawan Dodo, Madi Mangul, Mai Idon Taro, Bakin Kogi, Pattiko, Tarot, Kallaho, Lufat, Rajet, Ragog, Atoso, Bukka, Gura, Madont; and Riyom LGA: Sharubutu, Waram, Makaho, Jebu, Makera, Wuriya, Talma, Marmara, Tudun Ganawuri, Nukur, Tasheki I, Tasheki II, Jol, Gako Sara, Ranchiya, Ranchiyel, Mere, Dyen, and Riyom Village.

In Southern Kaduna, in the village of Kachechere (in Zangon Kataf LGA), Hausa-Fulani Muslim

settlements have been razed.⁴¹ In Gora Gan (also in Zangon Kataf LGA), Hausa-Fulani settlements near the town were attacked and burnt. A broader community statement by the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria alleges that within days “all the houses of the Fulani in the Chiefdom were burnt by mobs in broad daylight.”⁴² Similarly, in the communities of Ungwan Gaiya, Zonzon and Sokwai, Muslim herders’ families were attacked and displaced.⁴³

⁴¹ <https://daybreak.ng/hausa-community-opens-up-on-real-reasons-behind-crisis-in-z-kataf-kaduna/>

⁴² <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/07/fulani-victims-of-bandits-too-miyetti-allah/>

⁴³ <https://guardian.ng/news/again-bandits-invade-kaduna-community-kill-eight-persons/>

The Metamorphosis of Violence and Conflicts in Northern Nigeria

While the ethno-religious crises kept recurring, we in the country kept noticing the ‘metamorphosis’ of violence in terms of the rate, magnitude, viciousness, casualties, weaponry used, etc. In the 1980s, the killings were counted initially in double digits, but in the early 1990s, the killings began to be counted in triple digits and later within the same decade, they had grown into quadruple digits having reached thousands. Today, killings are happening even in several thousands, sometimes in a single swoop. In Tafawa Balewa for example, in 1991, about 200 Muslims were killed and over a thousand Muslims were killed in Zangon Kataf in 1992. However, in March 2018, the genocide of Mambila in Taraba State by the Mambila Ethnic Militia led to the killing of hundreds of Fulani and wanton destruction of their livestock and property worth millions of naira. In specific terms, based on available records, over 934 people were either killed or are still missing, 30,000 cattle were killed, 10,000 were maimed, and over 15,000 were rustled.⁴⁴

In terms of weapons/arms used in such conflicts, a similar ‘metamorphosis’ was experienced. In the 1980s, people were using crude traditional weapons like machetes, knives, swords, and bows and arrows. As the hostilities grew, tribal militias began to improvise Dane guns and other light arms. From the early 2000s, the country began to witness the proliferation of more sophisticated weapons, and even explosives also began to be used in conflicts. It is sad to note that things have grown so bad and our internal security has

⁴⁴Hausa-Fulani Community(2018). Mambilla Genocide: A Perpetual Practice of Savagery or a Culture of Impunity - A Call for Lasting Solutions. Unpublished Report Compiled by Hausa-Fulani of Sardauna Local Government Area, Taraba State.

degenerated to such an extent that RPGs and machine guns are being used and AK-47s have become a common and easy possession among criminals and various gangs, terrorists, bandits, and ethno-religious militias. Killings and bloodshed have become daily occurrences that no longer disturb our individual and collective conscience and sensibilities.

Marginalization, Oppression and Persecution of Muslims in the South-West

Two facts about Islam and Muslims in the South-West cannot be disputed. These are, first, the fact that Islam predated Christianity in the region by several centuries (Gbadamosi, 2018), and by that token, the Muslim population is greater than that of the Christians. Certain historical incidents or accidents in the last three centuries, however, have endowed or rather conferred some educational and socio-economic advantages and privileges on the Christians in the region over and above, and at the expense of, the Muslims. In spite of their numerical dominance, the Muslims have been relegated to the background in almost all spheres of life and have remained over the years at the receiving end. Consequently, the relationship between the Yoruba Muslims and their Christian counterparts has consistently and persistently been characterized by either marginalization, oppression or even persecution against the Muslims.

Like their Muslim brethren in the North, the Yoruba Muslims in the South-West initially resisted Western education. This was because, as it were, the missionaries were the first to introduce Western education both to the southern and northern parts of the country. The essential purpose of the education so introduced by the missionaries, therefore, was evangelism and propagation of Christianity. This fact explains Muslim reluctance, resistance, and in some situations even rejection of the education first introduced by the missionaries. The Muslims were, however, vindicated because a good number of the Muslim children who attended those schools got converted to Christianity.

This resistance to Western education by Muslims was undoubtedly genuine given the explanation presented above. It was, however, again the factor that accorded the Christians the privilege of getting educated earlier and becoming more numerous than the Muslims. Up to this moment, the gap has not been bridged. Consequently, the attendant and concomitant effect of this educational backwardness is, therefore, an all-round backwardness in politics, the economy, and all other spheres of life. Sadly, it is the weapon or instrument that the Christians have always deployed to either marginalize, oppress, or even persecute the Muslims in the South-West. The story of Muslim-Christian relationship in the South-West, therefore, has always been that of marginalization, oppression, and persecution against the Muslims.

It is pertinent to mention here that because of its relative homogeneity, the South-West region has witnessed few ethno-religious crises compared to the North. However, as Professor Farouq Kperogi forcefully asserted and defended persistently and consistently, the Yoruba Muslims suffer a great deal of bigotry and discrimination from their Christian counterparts. According to Kperogi, the Yoruba Muslims have endured “perpetual symbolic and cultural violence.... unvarnished hostility and or casual rhetorical inferiorization.”⁴⁵ It is therefore clear that although there have been few cases of physical conflicts, the fact remains that Muslims in this region have been living under various forms of psychological assaults and terrorism. These assertions are proven by certain examples presented in the preceding paragraphs.

⁴⁵ <https://www.farooqkperogi.com/2021/11/bigotry-against-yoruba-muslims-response.html>

i) Institutional Religious Discrimination in Education and Employment

The most glaring manifestations of the suffering experienced by Yoruba Muslims at the hands of their Christian counterparts are found in the areas of education and employment. The point was earlier made that Yoruba Christians have had the upper hand in the acquisition of Western education. They have, therefore, dominated all educational institutions and educational parastatals in their respective states, within the region, and the country as a whole. Out of bigotry, prejudices, Islamophobia, and hate, therefore, they have unrelentingly and viciously always promulgated rules and regulations, and formulated policies that are very much detrimental to Muslims. They would leave no stone unturned in putting hurdles in the path of Muslim pursuit of learning and overall educational aspirations. The intent behind their discriminatory assaults and persecutions is wicked. It is nothing but desperation to perpetually keep the Muslims behind and at bay. Some examples of such vicious actions against Muslims include:

a) Persecution of Muslim Female Students for Wearing *Hijab*

There has been an unending fight between Muslim parents of female students and Christian teachers, school administrators, education officials, and governments. The use of *hijab* by Muslim female students is a religious obligation and an exercise of fundamental human rights guaranteed by the Nigerian Constitution. But for decades now, out of sheer bigotry, the Yoruba Christians have continued to persecute Muslim female students over the use of *hijab*. These persecutions are manifested in many ways, ranging from insults, and dismissal from schools to molestation and

physical assaults. The fanaticism with which the Christians fight the *hijab* and the Muslim girls who adorn it has been quite extreme to the extent that even when such rights were clearly and unequivocally affirmed by several court judgements, they remained stubbornly adamant and unrelenting. Lecturers in universities and other tertiary institutions have sent female students wearing *hijabs* out of their classes. Such kinds of persecutions over the *hijab* do not stop at schools, but extend to interview sessions for employment and even to workplaces.⁴⁶

Discrimination and prejudice against the wearing of the *hijab* by female Muslims in schools, workplaces, and public places by non-Muslims are more prevalent in the South-West states of Lagos, Oyo, Osun, and Ogun. According to a report published by The Guardian newspaper on 15 October 2023,⁴⁷ one of the reasons for the controversy is that “the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) opposed the wearing of *hijab* by Muslim girls in public or Christian-owned private schools because it believes that such practice could encourage the spread of Islam in schools.” This myopic and Islamophobic intolerance by CAN and other non-Muslim groups and individuals led the Lagos State Government, at a

⁴⁶ <https://guardian.ng/features/friday-worship/muric-alleges-victimisation-of-southwest-muslims/>

⁴⁷ TheGuardian. *Hijab Controversy: When discrimination, prejudice becloud human rights of Muslim women, girls*, October 15, 2023. <https://guardian.ng/features/hijab-controversy-when-discrimination-prejudice-becloud-human-rights-of-muslim-women-girls/>

point, to insist on the secularity of schools by prohibiting the use of *hijab*.

However, after several years of litigation that culminated at the country's apex court, the Supreme Court of Nigeria, a landmark judgment delivered in 2022 ruled in favour of Muslim female students' right to wear the *hijab* in public schools. Unfortunately, despite this definitive ruling, the *hijab* controversy persists in Lagos State, and female Muslims continue to be subjected to persistent embarrassment, harassment, and emotional trauma for wearing the *hijab* in schools, workplaces, and public places.

Several cases illustrate the public harassment and emotional trauma inflicted on female Muslims for wearing the *hijab*. One notable example is the case of Aisha Alabi, a 12-year-old JSS 1 student of Kadara Junior Grammar School, Ebute Metta, Lagos, who, in 2013, was harassed and mercilessly beaten for wearing the *hijab* on her school uniform within the school premises. The school principal, Mrs. E. C. Ukpaka, convened an emergency assembly where Aisha was subjected to 32 strokes of the cane.⁴⁸

Another prominent case involved Asiyat Abdulkareem and Maryam Oyeniya, who were similarly harassed for wearing the *hijab*. Asiyat subsequently instituted legal action against the

⁴⁸ TheGuardian. *Hijab Controversy: When discrimination, prejudice becloud human rights of Muslim women, girls*, October 15, 2023. <https://guardian.ng/features/hijab-controversy-when-discrimination-prejudice-becloud-human-rights-of-muslim-women-girls/>

Lagos State Government. In its judgment of 17 October 2014, the High Court of Lagos State upheld the *hijab* restriction. Dissatisfied, the complainants appealed the decision, and in July 2016, the Court of Appeal ruled in favour of the appellants. The Lagos State Government appealed this decision to the Supreme Court. On 17 June 2022, the Supreme Court of Nigeria dismissed the appeal and affirmed the right of willing female Muslim students in Lagos public primary and secondary schools to wear the *hijab*.⁴⁹

The International School, University of Ibadan (ISI), also experienced its own Islamophobic *hijab* controversy in November 2018, when female Muslim students were denied entry for wearing the *hijab* alongside their school uniforms. In response, some Muslim parents, under the platform of the International School Muslim Parents' Forum, demanded that female students be allowed to wear the *hijab* in exercise of their constitutional right to freedom of religion. The school management opposed this demand, citing a strict school dress code contained in its constitution. Consequently, the parents, alongside the Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC), instituted legal proceedings on behalf of the students. Multiple suits were filed at the Oyo State High Court, Ibadan, challenging the school's policy as unconstitutional, particularly for violating Section

⁴⁹ TheGuardian. *Hijab Controversy: When discrimination, prejudice becloud human rights of Muslim women, girls*, October 15, 2023. <https://guardian.ng/features/hijab-controversy-when-discrimination-prejudice-becloud-human-rights-of-muslim-women-girls/>

38 of the Constitution, which guarantees freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.⁵⁰

After years of litigation, in May 2024, the presiding judge of the High Court ruled that female Muslim students have the constitutional right to wear the *hijab* as part of their school uniform at ISI, emphasizing that the school, being a public institution, cannot deny this right.⁵¹ The judge further warned that “the school, its staff, or agents have no right to punish students for wearing the *hijab* on or outside the school premises.”⁵²

In Osun State, the state chapter of CAN made concerted efforts to frustrate the former governor, Rauf Aregbesola, from implementing a State High Court judgment that affirmed the right of female Muslim students to wear the *hijab* in schools. The Osun CAN even mischievously accused the governor of masterminding the court judgment in furtherance of an alleged “Islamisation agenda.”⁵³

⁵⁰ TheGuardian. *Hijab Controversy: When discrimination, prejudice becloud human rights of Muslim women, girls*, October 15, 2023. <https://guardian.ng/features/hijab-controversy-when-discrimination-prejudice-becloud-human-rights-of-muslim-women-girls/>

⁵¹ TheGuardian, *MURIC hails hijab victory in Ibadan court*, 24 May 2024. <https://guardian.ng/features/friday-worship/muric-hails-hijab-victory-in-ibadan-court/>

⁵² Daily Post, *Court grants Muslim students right to wear hijab in UI school*, 22 May 2024. <https://dailypost.ng/2024/05/22/breaking-court-grants-muslim-students-right-to-wear-hijab-in-ui-school/>

⁵³ TheGuardian. *Hijab Controversy: When discrimination, prejudice becloud human rights of Muslim women, girls*, October 15, 2023. <https://guardian.ng/features/hijab-controversy-when-discrimination-prejudice-becloud-human-rights-of-muslim-women-girls/>

The situation is similar in some parts of the North-Central region due to the spillover effect of the persecution of female Muslims in the South-West. For instance, in Ilorin, Kwara State, tensions escalated in 2021 over the use of the *hijab* in schools that were formerly missionary-owned but later taken over by the state government. In line with constitutional provisions on freedom of religion, Muslim parents demanded that female students be allowed to wear the *hijab* as an expression of their freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. However, some schools vehemently resisted this demand.⁵⁴ As a result, the Kwara State Government ordered the closure of 10 secondary schools in Ilorin following protests and confrontations over the *hijab* issue.

When the government later directed the schools to reopen, with clear instructions that the use of *hijab* should be accommodated in compliance with a 2019 judgment of the Court of Appeal sitting in Ilorin, which held that refusal to allow *hijab* in public schools is discriminatory and unconstitutional, violence erupted in some locations. At Surulere Baptist Secondary School, Christian staff reportedly blocked Muslim students wearing the *hijab* from entering the school.⁵⁵ This action prompted peaceful protests

⁵⁴ ThisDayLive, *Hijab Controversy: Peace Talk between Kwara, Religious Leaders End in Deadlock*, 22 February 2021. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/2021/02/22/hijab-controversy-peace-talk-between-kwara-religious-leaders-end-in-deadlock/>

⁵⁵ ThisDayLive, *Violence in Ilorin as Govt Orders Reopening of 10 Schools Without Resolving Hijab Issue*, 17 March 2021.

by Muslim students, which were met with counter-mobilization by Christian groups, leading to fatalities. Among the victims was Habeeb Idris, a Muslim parent who was killed on 3 February 2022 during a *hijab*-related crisis involving Oyun Baptist High School, Ijagbo, Oyun Local Government Area.⁵⁶

Despite clear judicial pronouncements, female Muslim students in Kwara State continue to face harassment and persecution from non-Muslims for wearing the *hijab* to school. Recently, reports emerged that a Muslim female student at Federal Staff School, Adewole, Ilorin, was denied entry for wearing the *hijab*. In response, the Kwara State chapters of MURIC and the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (MSSN), in separate press statements, expressed deep concern over the incident and condemned the persistent disregard for court judgments affirming the right of willing female Muslim students to wear the *hijab*.⁵⁷

b) Fixing Lectures and Examinations at Inappropriate Hours and Days

This is another way of discriminating against the Muslims in the South-West and also oppressing

<https://www.thisdaylive.com/2021/03/17/violence-in-ilorin-as-govt-orders-reopening-of-10-schools-without-resolving-hijab-issue/>

⁵⁶ TheGuardian. *Hijab Controversy: When discrimination, prejudice becloud human rights of Muslim women, girls*, October 15, 2023. <https://guardian.ng/features/hijab-controversy-when-discrimination-prejudice-becloud-human-rights-of-muslim-women-girls/>

⁵⁷ Muslim News Nigeria, *MURIC, MSSN condemn rights violation as govt school bars students over hijab in Ilorin*, October 13, 2025. <https://muslimnews.com.ng/2025/10/13/muric-mssn-condemn-rights-violation-as-govt-school-bars-students-over-hijab-in-ilorin/>

them. Lectures are often fixed by Christian lecturers to coincide with Jumu'ah prayer times on Fridays, not to talk of the times of the five daily prayers which are daily occurrences. Similarly, institutions and examination bodies and professional regulatory bodies do not mind fixing examinations even on Sallah days, not to talk of Jumu'ah prayer times. No amount of complaints would make the Christians stop such kinds of insensitive, callous and wicked treatment of their Muslim students or colleagues.

c) Denial of Job and Employment Opportunities

Yoruba Muslims go through a great deal of discrimination and sometimes, complete denial of jobs and employment opportunities. As was alleged by Kperogi,⁵⁸ the bigotry could be so intense and deep that it sometimes compels Muslim applicants/interviewees to hide their Muslim names in order to secure jobs. In some universities, Christian lecturers block all chances and possibilities of appointing Muslim lecturers into their departments or faculties. They make sure that they perpetually dominate their departments or faculties.

ii) Political and Socio-Economic Persecutions

Yoruba Muslims have long faced marginalization in political spheres across Southwestern Nigeria.⁵⁹ Despite their significant contributions to the region's development,

⁵⁸ <https://www.farooqkperogi.com/2021/11/bigotry-against-yoruba-muslims-response.html>

⁵⁹ Daily Post. Yoruba muslims shut out of political appointments – MURIC raises alarm. <https://dailypost.ng/2025/03/17/yoruba-muslims-shut-out-of-political-appointments-muric-raises-alarm/>

they often find themselves underrepresented in key decision-making bodies. This exclusion hampers their ability to advocate effectively for their rights and interests, perpetuating a cycle of disenfranchisement.⁶⁰ A notable instance of this marginalization is observed in federal appointments. Yoruba Muslims have expressed concerns over the perceived underrepresentation of Muslims from the Southwest in the current administration, highlighting that over 80% of political appointments from the region often go to Christians, despite Yoruba Muslims' active support during the presidential campaign.⁶¹

Beyond political spheres, Yoruba Muslims encounter socio-economic challenges that hinder their progress, including access to social services, education, employment, and economic opportunities.⁶² The lack of cohesive representation has further weakened their political leverage, making it difficult to address issues like discrimination and unequal access to resources, thereby perpetuating socio-economic marginalization.⁶³

⁶⁰ <https://muslimnews.com.ng/2024/10/13/strengthening-islamic-unity-and-progress-in-yoruba-land-by-prof-ishaq-oloyede/>

⁶¹ <https://www.westernpost.ng/yoruba-muslim-scholars-fault-federal-appointments-demand-establishment-of-sharia-courts/>

⁶² <https://muslimnews.com.ng/2024/10/13/strengthening-islamic-unity-and-progress-in-yoruba-land-by-prof-ishaq-oloyede/>

⁶³ <https://guardian.ng/features/friday-worship/muric-alleges-victimisation-of-southwest-muslims/>

Continuous Persecution of Muslims in the South-East and South-South

The story of the Muslims in the South-East and South-South of Nigeria is one of lamentation, trauma, and unending mortification. There exists a powerful illusion that the entire region is a monolithic Christian enclave, a narrative that obscures the experiences of indigenous Muslims. Muslims who are indigenes of these areas are frequently treated as aliens and anathematized; their political and economic spaces are often appropriated by majority Christian groups, leaving Muslims marginalized in almost every sphere. While comprehensive statistical data on this marginalization are scarce, documented incidents support this pattern of exclusion.

In the educational sphere, Christian Religious Studies (CRS) is taught in all public schools across these two regions, and in practice, it is often imposed on all students regardless of faith, while Islamic Religious Studies (IRS) is rarely made available or is treated as *taboo* for Muslim students. Muslim girls in parts of Nigeria have also faced denial of the right to wear the *hijab* in public schools, a form of dress-code discrimination that contributes to the sense of marginalization and psychological trauma experienced by Muslim women. Although much of the documented evidence comes from the South-West rather than exclusively the South-East or South-South, the trend underscores a wider issue of religious-dress and educational discrimination.

One high-profile case that underscores this fraught environment involves the former Governor of Rivers State, Nyesom Wike. Wike publicly affirmed that “Rivers State is

a Christian state, and I have no apologies for saying that.”⁶⁴ However, while there was a report of the demolition of a mosque in the Trans-Amadi area of Port Harcourt by the Rivers State Government on August 20, 2019, the incident was later shown to involve a disputed piece of land, and the demolition affected the fence, foundation to the DPC level, and pillars, rather than a completed mosque structure.⁶⁵ Accordingly, Wike and state authorities denied the demolition of a functioning mosque, as widely reported by newspapers including Daily Trust⁶⁶ and Vanguard.⁶⁷ Despite the denial, the incident, coupled with Wike’s declaration, continues to raise serious concerns about religious inclusivity and the marginalization of non-Christian communities in the region.

Muslims have become soft targets in these regions whenever disputes arise between them and non-Muslims, or when some people decide to express their grievances regarding government policies or actions. Their properties and places of worship are often not spared. There is credible evidence that Muslim communities in the South-East have been attacked. For instance, in November 2020, mobs in Nsukka, Enugu State, razed two mosques and destroyed shops in a predominantly Muslim Hausa-Fulani enclave following a dispute between a Muslim woman and a tricycle operator. Many Muslim traders reportedly fled, and the local Muslim community leader stated that more than 90% of

⁶⁴ The Guardian. I owe nobody apology declaring Rivers Christian state, Wike insists. <https://guardian.ng/news/i-owe-nobody-apology-declaring-rivers-christian-state-wike-insists/>

⁶⁵ <https://www.pulse.ng/articles/news/local/did-gov-nyesom-wike-demolish-a-mosque-in-rivers-fact-check-2024081403442109656>

⁶⁶ <https://dailytrust.com/rivers-govt-did-not-demolish-any-mosque-wike/>

⁶⁷ <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/09/breaking-no-mosque-was-demolished-in-rivers-state-northern-youth-groups-say/>

Hausa Muslims had emigrated from the town.⁶⁸ Similarly, during the so-called #EndSARS protests, Muslims were allegedly attacked and dozens were killed in Oyibo, Rivers State; Aba, Abia State; and a mosque built in 1965 in Orlu, Imo State, was burnt down.

It is important to emphasize the limitations in the available data. While anecdotal and media-reported evidence clearly indicates episodes of discrimination, marginalization, and violence against Muslims in these regions, many of the incidents remain under-documented and under-reported. Nonetheless, the pattern of marginalization and persecution of Muslims, substantiated through attacks on mosques and properties in parts of the regions, discrimination in schooling, and inflammatory public declarations by senior political actors, underscores the extent of political, economic, and social exclusion of Muslims in the South-East and South-South. This speaks volumes and continues to be a serious concern.

⁶⁸ <https://www.thecable.ng/mosques-razed-as-crisis-breaks-out-in-enugu-town/>

Conclusion

In the final analysis, truth stands distinct from falsehood, as light stands apart from darkness. This book, *For God and History: Exposing the Fallacy of Christian Victimhood and Muslim Persecution in Nigeria*, has been a humble but resolute effort to let light dispel the darkness of distortion, and to let truth prevail over decades of misrepresentation and propaganda.

Our purpose has not been to vilify or vindicate any faith community, but to expose the persistent fallacy of Christian victimhood and the corresponding misrepresentation of Muslims as aggressors within Nigeria's complex inter-religious landscape. For too long, falsehood, bias, and selective narration have obscured the truth about our nation's history. We could no longer remain silent while the patience and restraint of Muslims were mistaken for weakness and their commitment to peace distorted as complicity. Silence in the face of falsehood is itself a betrayal of truth. Thus, we have spoken, not in anger or vengeance, but in obedience to the divine command to "be upright bearers of witness for Allah, even if it be against yourselves" (Q 4:135).

From the colonial encounter through post-independence Nigeria and into the present, the dynamics of power, politics, and identity have shaped the narratives of both Christianity and Islam. Yet, while Christian institutions have long enjoyed dominant access to state structures, international media, and missionary networks, they have simultaneously nurtured and exported a discourse of persecution, one that portrays Muslims as oppressors and Christianity as an embattled faith. This distortion has not only misled foreign observers and policymakers but has also

deepened domestic divisions and inflamed cycles of mistrust and violence.

The evidence presented throughout this work reveals that Muslims in Nigeria, contrary to the dominant narrative, have often been the victims rather than the perpetrators of aggression in the country's many ethno-religious crises. From the blood of slain leaders in 1966 to the ashes of mosques destroyed in our time, the story of the Nigerian Muslim has been one of endurance, restraint, and unwavering commitment to coexistence. Yet this forbearance has been misread as guilt, and our moderation as hypocrisy. Enough, therefore, of silence. The time has come for truth to take its rightful place in the chronicles of this nation.

This book is not a call to bitterness, but a call to truth, for only justice and honesty can heal a fractured nation. It stands as a testimony first before God, then before history, and before humanity, that Nigerian Muslims have largely remained faithful to the principles of justice, peace, and national unity. We have refused to answer lies with lies, or violence with vengeance. Our guiding light remains the Word of God: "Let not the hatred of a people cause you to swerve from justice. Be just; that is nearer to piety" (Qur'an, 5:8).

The challenges confronting Nigeria today demand courage, the courage to reject falsehood, abandon prejudice, and embrace truth. History will not absolve those who manipulate faith to divide, nor those who remain silent in the face of deceit. It will, however, vindicate those who, for God and for history, stand firmly by the truth.

May this work serve as both testimony and warning that peace cannot be built on lies, and that only truth, anchored in justice and faith, can deliver Nigeria from the bondage of hate and the fallacy of persecution.

For God and for History, let truth bear witness, and let it prevail.

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