



Focus on Religious Freedom

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The Witness of Christian Martyrs in Nigeria: An Inspiration to Defend our Faith and Religious Freedom

Responding to an “existential threat” to Christianity in Nigeria, President Trump has designated that nation a Country of Particular Concern (CPC); i.e., one that engages in severe violations of religious freedom under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998.

Agree or disagree with the president’s threatened responses—withdrawal of all U.S. aid to Nigeria or even military action—he has shined a welcome light on the ongoing, savagely anti-Christian atrocities.

According to The Catholic Register (Canada), “the human rights advocacy organization Intersociety,” reports “an average of 32 Christians ... murdered each day this year in Nigeria,” with “125,000 Christians and 60,000 moderate Muslims ... killed in Africa’s most populous nation since 2009, the year the terrorist group Boko Haram began its jihadist campaign.”¹

“The watchdog organization Open Doors International estimates that nearly 70 per cent of all Christians killed for their faith worldwide last year were in Nigeria. Millions of other Christians have been forcibly banished from their land, and many have been abducted, including over 140 priests in the past decade.”²

We, Christians in America, should offer prayers for our horribly persecuted Christian brothers and sisters in Nigeria. And we should urge our government to do what it can to help end these atrocities.

We might also reflect on what we are willing to suffer, to bear witness to our faith amid anti-Christian intolerance that, with some exceptions, is more subtle in America, but still very real—everything from ridicule and social ostracization, to disruption of certain career paths, to vandalism and desecration of churches.³

If we are tempted to give in to such pressure and intimidation, we might remind ourselves of what all those courageous Christian martyrs in Nigeria are enduring—and be inspired by their witness to stand up as Americans in defense of our faith and our religious freedom.

¹ The Catholic Register, “Nigerian bishop praises Trump’s defence of Christians,” November 4, 2025.

² Ibid.

³ Catholic News Agency, “Report finds over 400 cases of vandalism, other ‘hostile’ acts against churches in 2024,” August 13, 2025.