

Prayer Diary: Nigeria

18-24 February 2024

As you'll read in January's Response, the CSW Nigeria team has been training journalists from crisis-prone states, giving them a deeper understanding of freedom of religion or belief. The workshops were a great success. One facilitator said they were 'deeply optimistic' that the awareness raised will have a positive impact across Nigeria, as journalists use the skills acquired during the training to report more often and more accurately on freedom of religion or belief issues.

We are delighted that more training is due to take place in the year ahead. It is essential, occurring at a time when violations – including violence and abduction for ransom – are rife, and church leaders are particularly at risk. Meanwhile, blasphemy allegations, and their often-deadly repercussions, continue to impact the lives of people from a variety of religions and beliefs. Find out more at csw.org.uk/nigeria

Sunday 18 February

Ask the Father of compassion to comfort those who have experienced the devastation surrounding blasphemy accusations in Nigeria. We think of the family of Deborah Emmanuel, a Christian student who was brutally murdered in May 2022 following an unproven allegation, and others who still await justice for the killings of their loved ones.

Monday 19 February

Yahaya Sharif-Aminu, a member of the Tijjaniyya Sufi order of Islam, was detained in March 2020 for alleged blasphemy. He was later handed a death sentence by a Shari'a Court, which was overturned in January 2021, but a retrial was ordered. His lawyers have now taken the case to the Federal Supreme Court, where they are challenging Nigeria's Blasphemy Law and the constitutionality of Kano State's Shari'a Penal Code. Pray for justice.

Tuesday 20 February

Mubarak Bala, President of the Nigerian Humanist Society, is currently serving an astounding 24-year sentence for alleged blasphemy. Pray for an urgent review of this unjust sentence.

Wednesday 21 February

Give thanks for all who attended an awareness and fundraising dinner held by CSW Nigeria in Abuja. Pray that what they heard would remain in their hearts and minds, and would continue stirring support for the team's vital work.

Thursday 22 February

'We put our hope in the Lord. He is our help and our shield.' (Psalm 33:20 NLT)

Pray that the Lord would protect and deliver clergy, who are increasingly being targeted for abduction for ransom. Some are still murdered even after payments are made.

Friday 23 February

Terrorists operating in northwest Nigeria are increasingly targeting students, especially female undergraduates – 29 of whom were abducted from hostels between 22 September and 4 October 2023. Pray for the freedom of those still in captivity; for the recovery of those who have been released; and for effective strategies to protect students.

Saturday 24 February

Lord God, we thank you for the workshops delivered in 2023, and for the opportunity to train more journalists in 2024. Use these seeds to produce a deeper understanding of freedom of religion or belief, which in turn strengthens the media's ability to inform the public, and drive change. Amen.