

2nd November 2025

His Excellency,

Distinguished Senator Godswill Obot Akpabio, CON

President of the Senate

National Assembly Complex

Three Arms Zone,

Abuja – FCT

Nigeria

His Excellency,

Rt Hon Tajudeen Abbas CON

Speaker of the House of Representatives

National Assembly Complex

Three Arms Zone,

Abuja – FCT

Nigeria

Your Excellencies,

**OPEN LETTER TO THE SENATE PRESIDENT AND SPEAKER HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES:**

**APPEAL FOR URGENT LEGISLATIVE ATTENTION TO RELIGIOUS
FREEDOM CONCERNS AND THE CPC DESIGNATION OF NIGERIA BY
THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT**

We note reports that the National Assembly plans a delegation to the USA to respond to efforts by the U.S. Congress to engage Nigeria over ongoing attacks on religious freedom. Given the separate action by the U.S. President designating Nigeria a CPC, we, as advocates, experts, clerics, and stakeholders in freedom of religion and human

rights in Nigeria, are constrained to write and draw your attention to the situation in Nigeria—a situation already noted by parliaments in the UK, U.S., and Canada.

We are concerned that rather than investigate the claims against Nigeria currently under review by the U.S. Congress, the National Assembly is sending a team to attempt to deny what is already undeniable. The delegation would open itself to ridicule because they would be confronted with documented facts and data which they will not be able to refute. The result may simply be proof to the USA and the international community that the Nigerian government at best, is too weak to confront the situation in Nigeria and or is even complicit.

We therefore appeal to you to address the situation urgently so that the government may act appropriately, thereby avoiding the need for external intervention.

2. Your Excellency, the 2025 report by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), recommends that Nigeria be designated a "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) for egregious violations of religious freedom. This is not the first time such a recommendation has been made in the past two decades. This time, as on previous occasions, U.S. lawmakers, which includes Senator Ted Cruz, from Texas, introduced legislation to give effect to the Commission's recommendations. The USCIRF report highlights a range of serious issues. Among them are:

- Blasphemy laws and Sharia codes, especially in northern Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory, which permit states to adopt Sharia-based legal frameworks that criminalise certain religious expression. In practice these provisions are sometimes applied to non-Muslims (including Christians and humanists).
- The closure of schools, including Christian-affiliated institutions, during Ramadan in states such as Kano, Katsina, Kebbi and Bauchi.
- Widening tensions among ethnoreligious communities; the frequent targeting of Christian pastors, abductions and killings have been repeatedly documented.

3. Background and Context

It needs to be clarified from the outset that the challenges Christians face in Nigeria is essentially a Northern Nigerian problem, which explains the ignorance and indifference of some from that region including Pastors who deny the reality and gravity of the Christian experiences up North. Several States in northern Nigeria, especially the Sharia States have been historically hostile to Christianity and Christians. Indeed, in pursuance of its indirect rule system and appeasement with the Jihadist emirates, British colonial authorities stopped missionaries from operating in some areas, most of which are now Sharia states. Conversion out of Islam was forbidden and while Muslim clerics and individuals could mount loudspeakers and preach against Christianity Christians dared not speak—even in private—against Islam. The Area Courts operated as Sharia Courts and Christians were forced to appear before them.

At independence, several communities and ethnic nationalities that hadn't been subjugated by the retreating British colonial authorities were handed over or left in the hands of the Fulani Caliphate which before colonial rule were at different stages of territorial contestation. As a Colonial Governor of Northern Nigeria Sir Bryan Sharwood-Smith described in his book, *But Always as Friends*, this created tension between predominantly Christian and Animist Communities and Muslim traditional rulers. The aspirations of the Sokoto Caliphate to take over the whole of Northern Nigeria have remained largely alive. This is why 12 states promulgated Sharia laws and have been operating as exclusive Muslim entities and have engaged in campaigns to cancel or reduce the influence of Christianity. The dream of the jihadists to “dip the Qur'an into the Atlantic Ocean” remain evident among extremist elements. The following examples show clearly the pattern:

- i. In almost all the Sharia States Christians are not officially recognized and given access to governments facilities and institutions. In states such as Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, Jigawa, and Zamfara among others, access to public schools, recruitment into the civil service and promotions are difficult for to indigenous Hausa and Fulani Christian; At the Federal level even recruitment into the Armed Forces, Police and all other Security Agencies are denied Christians who are Hausas and Fulani, once they identify themselves as Christians.

- ii. Christians are denied access to land to build Churches and places of worship and where they build on privately acquired land such buildings are demolished; on the other hand, Muslims are allowed to build mosques in their homes and privately acquired land; In some States such as Borno States, Christians were forced to go out of city centre to build churches at the outskirts of Maiduguri, a place the government calls, Jerusalem. In Abuja, a retired Supreme Court Justice was denied the inclusion of a chapel in his retirement home in a neighborhood surrounded with hundreds of individual home mosques. Tertiary institutions in Kaduna have mosques while Christians were denied land for churches or had same revoked. Indeed during the 2011 post-election violence, only the Catholic and Protestant churches were attacked at the ABU campus, and it was a struggle to rebuild them despite being just the latest of multiple times over the decades that they have been attacked. Certificates of Occupancy are also denied to Christian Churches in places like Sokoto, Katsina, Zamfara, Kano, Jigawa, Borno and Yobe States. Churches with such are few and renewal has become restricted. Churches are placed in the same category in some States as brothels and have restricted operational guidelines.
- iii. In Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Kano and States: Christian students of the Fellowship of Christian Students (FCS) and the Nigeria Fellowship of Evangelical Students were denied places of worship with some meeting only under trees. Such places are: Umaru Ali Shinkafi Polytechnic (Sokoto State Polytechnic), School of Health in Tsafe, Zamfara State, Kano State University of Science and Technology, Wudil, Kano State. The Christian community at the Federal University in Dutsima, Katsina State have continued to have running battles with the University authority over a place of worship for their Sunday services and the regular student fellowship meetings on the campus for years now.
- iv. Many demolished Churches and places of worship from the Northwest post-election violence of 2011 remain ruins just like churches destroyed in the Northeast from 2006-2012 by Boko Haram terrorists. (See attached Gwoza

report on 148 churches destroyed and Stefanos Foundation summary of 764 churches destroyed in 2011 PEV). There are several Churches in the Some States in the North West that were demolished by State governments. Some Churches went to court and got judgments. However, the State governments are yet to grant them the right to rebuild the Churches. Most of the States in the North West do not give Permission to Christians to build Churches. When individual Christians apply for land the land owners add as part of the land agreement that such lands should not be used to build Churches or brothel!

- v. In Kaduna and Nasarawa States, Muslim governors, Nasir El Rufai of Kaduna State and Abdullahi Sule of Nasarawa created Muslim emirates, headed by Muslims to rule over Christian communities, and Christians have no opportunities to rule themselves and traditional rulers; in the case of Kaduna State, Malam Nasir El Rufai actually abolished traditional institutions of Christian communities and replaced them with Muslim only traditional institutions to rule over Christian communities;
- vi. Forceful abducting and conversion of Christian girls and women.
- vii. Many Christian girls continue to languish as sex slaves in Boko Haram's captivity but in Katsina, Bauchi, Adamawa etc Christian girls are routinely abducted by Muslim neighbors and forcefully converted and married off. Many Christians girls in countless numbers, as they are simply too numerous remain in Boko Haram's captivity since 2009 till date. Many continue to be kidnapped in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States from their homes, farms, Churches and in villages/towns. These are forced to convert to Islam and many are not only serving as slaves, comfort wives to Boko Haram fighters but sex slaves to many top Boko Haram Commanders. The few known by name are: Leah Sharibu, Praise Austin, Joy, Lydia, Monica, Josephine, Ann Bitrus, Saratu, Rose Warasani, Maryam, etc, The UN – A/HRC/WG.6/45/NGA/3 articles 20 and 21 in page 4 specifically highlights the forceful conversion of Christian girls into Islam by The Para-Mallam Peace Foundation (TP-MPF) as submitted and cited in the UN Summary for Nigeria's UPR of January 2024 The CSWN has

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documented several instances of abduction of Christian girls below the age of consent who were forcibly converted into Islam in several states in the North. Its report is attached. The Prison Inmate and Development Initiative (PIDI) has also documented several cases of the Shariah Commission in Bauchi State forcefully seizing Christian women, including pregnant women and converting them to Islam. A copy of one of the letters issued by the Sharia Commission is also attached.

- viii. In nearly all Christian Communities and settlements that were attacked the attackers did so in the name of Muslims; they usually preceded their attacks with shouts of Allahu Akbar and in communities where both Muslims and Christians live, mosques are NOT destroyed; Only Churches are destroyed in communities where these herders, bandits or Boko haram attack;
- ix. These Armed Fulani Herdsmen, Bandits and or Boko Haram/ISWAP mount roadblocks on highways and usually separate Muslims from Christians and often kidnap or and kill the Christians. When Female students were kidnapped from DAPCHI in Yobe States all Muslims students were freed after government acted on the global local and international outrage expressed. Leah Sharibu, who is still in captivity since 2018 was not released, as her Muslim classmates told the Press then, because she refused to renounce Christianity; By contrast Apart from Leah's case, over 80 of the 276 celebrated kidnapping of the overwhelmingly Christian Chibok schoolgirls abducted in 2014 remain captive 11 years after. Some who escaped however remain in government custody cohabiting with their captors - still reunited with their families and kept as "Muslim wives." is a clear case in point (See CSW report of 2024.)
- x. When Boko Haram leader Shekau started his bloody insurgency, he specifically stated in his numerous videos that the intention of his campaign was to enthrone Islamic rule on all of Nigeria. He targeted Christians in Maiduguri first, kidnapping several and followed up by blowing Churches and Christian centres. Then he started attacking Muslims and when asked explained that he was attacking Muslims who were refusing to join him to attack Christians. These

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videos are available. He did not hide his Islamic motive and did not hide his love for what the ISIS was doing in the Middle East; Indeed, security agents have reported recovering instructional materials produced by ISIS from Boko Haram camps and as well, that there was evidence of Boko Haram transferring money from Nigeria to ISIS-L; It should be noted that several prominent Muslim leaders in Nigeria, including former Head of State President Muhammad Buhari had made public comments which sound as giving support to the Boko Haram; recently the Sultan said Boko Haram wasn't against education but bad government. Muhammed Yusuf the founder of Boko Haram was also violent against Christians publicly in Borno before the group went underground and preached death to Christians, destroying churches and beheading them personally (Reference Stefanos book translating his violent sermons) Videos published on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok among others by Armed Fulani Herdsmen, Boko Haram and Bandits usually state religious agenda and intent of attacks.

- xi. The attacks on Christian communities in Bauchi, Adamawa, Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau and Taraba States which targeted Christian communities were planned and well-coordinated in advance. An Armed Fulani terrorist apprehended for a massacre in Enugu State confessed to premeditated planning outside the state before their incursion into the southeast. Documentary evidence now suggests that these were planned and well-funded attacks. (eg recovered battle plans drawn up by MACBAN).

4. Debate over how many people have been killed

Your Excellency it is surprising that government officials, including members of the National Assembly have been arguing over whether more Muslims and Christians have been killed by Boko Haram and terrorists in Nigeria. Whether Muslims or Christians every life matters and should not be cut down by any unlawful means. However, it is disingenuous for government to argue that more Muslims have been killed whereas, in the census data that we have in Nigeria, the religions of people being counted since the Babangida census are not recorded. How then did the government obtain such a

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conclusion? The only data available are those made available by Church leaders and organisations who have records. However, government and or the National Assembly can remedy the situation by conducting hearings and investigations to know the numbers of people killed, the properties, including religious buildings that have been destroyed.

5. Government Complicity and Response

The problems go beyond non-state actors. Mobs have lynched individuals (for example, Deborah Emmanuel in Sokoto) with no legal consequence. In Abuja, the killing of a female evangelist, Eunice Olawale on 9th July, 2016, remains similarly unprosecuted though the killers were known. Following the 2011 presidential election, in which President Muhammadu Buhari lost, the 12 sharia States witnessed widespread destruction of 764 churches in 48 hours, and Christian-owned businesses and the killing of hundreds of Christians; yet Former President Buhari demanded the release of the few arrested and when he got into office freed them. Most of the Christian victims of the PEV were never compensated and in Katsina, the state tried to demolish a 99-year-old ECWA church rather than allow them to rebuild it. The state's failure to enforce accountability, combined with brazen bias and extreme violence in areas of weak governance, creates a climate of impunity that deepens fear, mistrust and marginalisation.

It should be noted that the Nigerian government, as currently constituted, has not helped matters. It is a Muslim-Muslim (Muslim president and Muslim vice president) presidency in defiance of religious sensitivities that sought balancing historically. The VP is a governor from a northeast state that allowed the Boko Haram insurgency to flourish. The Minister of State for Defense was from a northwest state that allowed banditry to flourish after multiple failed peace deals and buy outs. The NSA is from Fulani stock and had previously said that the Fulanis were killing people because they were angry at Buhari for not fulfilling a secret deal with them.

For the first time since the return to democracy in 1999, the villa chapel which existed even under Muslim presidents Yar'adua and Buhari has been closed under the present

administration, notwithstanding that the First Lady is a putative pastor. It should be noted that Aso Rock Presidential villa had always had at least two mosques - one for head of state and one for the First Lady - and no Christian chapel until President Obasanjo's election.

6. Immediate Actions Required by the National Assembly

Considering the serious concerns raised by the United States Government and the recent CPC designation of Nigeria, urgent legislative action is required to address the underlying issues identified. We agree with the USCIRF's assessment that Nigeria's legal system imposes systematic restrictions on freedom of religion or belief, for instance through the application of capital punishment blasphemy laws in twelve states, and that these laws offend the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Blasphemy laws and Sharia codes, especially in northern Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory, which prohibit certain religious expression. In practice these provisions are sometimes applied to non-Muslims (including Christians and Humanists). A particularly bizarre current case in Abuja saw a Christian trader from the south hauled before the sharia court of appeal, despite protestations, and his shop wares were auctioned off notwithstanding the lack of jurisdiction.

Given the Nigerian State's evident unwillingness or inability to protect the religious rights of all its citizens, including their right to life and security, we believe the following are urgently required:

- i. There is a critical need for the National Assembly to immediately open an investigation into the several issues that have been raised in paragraph 3 (i-x), whose actions violate the constitution and seriously offend the religious freedom of Christians and other citizens otherwise Nigeria will continue to face designation as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC), and the imposition of appropriate penalties and sanctions on Nigerian entities found complicit in religious-freedom violations.
- ii. The National Assembly should pass an Act of the National Assembly outlawing blasphemy and voiding all the blasphemy laws already passed by some State

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Houses of Assemblies. This is a clear constitutional matter within the purview and powers of the National Assembly.

- iii. The President should immediately direct all Federal Government Institutions in that have refused to give land to Christians Students to build Chapels to immediately do so in the way Muslims have been given lands to build Mosques; In the spirit of fairness Federal government Institutions that may have denied Muslims land to build mosques should be compelled to do so.
- iv. It has been consistently observed that the National Assembly allocates over ₦10 billion annually to the National Board for Arabic and Islamic Studies (NBAIS) in the federal budget. For example, in the 2022 national budget, mosques and Islamic schools received a combined allocation of ₦12.4 billion, while churches and Christian schools received only ₦24 million—amounting to a mere 0.20%. In the interest of equity and constitutional fairness, we recommend that a National Board for Christian Religious Studies (NBCRS) be established and funded at a level equal to NBAIS; alternatively, if equal treatment cannot be guaranteed, NBAIS should be discontinued to prevent continued structural and budgetary discrimination.
- v. We call on the National Assembly to enact legislation prohibiting State governments and education authorities from compelling pupils in Christian schools—or in any school—to study Islamic Religious Studies. Reports from several Northern States indicate that even mission-owned schools have been pressured to introduce mandatory Islamic Religious Studies, contrary to the constitutional guarantee of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. Such practices violate parental rights and undermine the autonomy of faith-based educational institutions.
- vi. We further urge the enactment of laws ensuring that Christian pupils are not compelled to observe Islamic religious practices such as fasting during Ramadan, nor should Christian schools be required to modify their operating hours solely for religious observance. Every Nigerian, regardless of location,

should enjoy a sense of belonging and be free to practise their faith without coercion, as guaranteed by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

- vii. The National Assembly should immediately enact legislations that will outlaw all religious security or Police organisations such as the Hisbah and or the Sharia Commissions which, as in the case of Bauchi State, regularly kidnaps Christian girls below the ages of consent.
- viii. The Federal Government should demonstrate its capacity and constitutional responsibility by reclaiming all communities and settlements illegally occupied by insurgents and restoring them to their indigenous inhabitants. This includes the 63 settlements in Plateau State, the 163 settlements in Kaduna State, the numerous unconfirmed settlements in Benue State, and other affected areas across the country. The government must ensure that terrorists are fully dislodged and pursued, and that displaced citizens are safely resettled in their ancestral homes.
- ix. The governments attitude to the cases of Leah Sharibu and the remaining Chibok girls has been nothing but reprehensible and speak clearly to the allegations of government complicity; Its even more worrying that the some of the released Chibok girls were not released by the Borno State governor to their parents and some are still said to be giving birth to their terrorist captors.
- x. The National Assembly should amend the Human Rights Commission Act to include a department that will record and investigate cases and allegations of abuse of religious rights. We note that the House of Representatives rejected a bill sponsored by Hon. Edward Pwajok top create such a department.
- xi. The National Assembly should hold hearings on the state of religious freedom in Nigeria to which we will gladly make representation with our massive, amassed data. It is ironic that NASS instituted an ad hoc committee to investigate unfounded terror financing claims of a US Congressman but did not do likewise on a well-founded religious persecution bill by a US Senator.

We thank Your Excellency for your kind attention and for your continued leadership in upholding the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which guarantees freedom of thought, conscience, and religion for all citizens.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the assurances of our highest regards.

Yours faithfully,

***For and on behalf of the Global Coalition for Freedom of Religion in Nigeria
(GCFRN)***

Emmanuel Ogebe, ESQ
Justice for Jos Project
Washington USA

Hon. Rimamnde Shawulu Kwewum
Middle Belt Dialogue
Abuja

Dr. Sam Amadi,
Coordinator,
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Revd. Dr. Gideon Para-Mallam
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The Para-Mallam Peace Foundation
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Former President ECWA

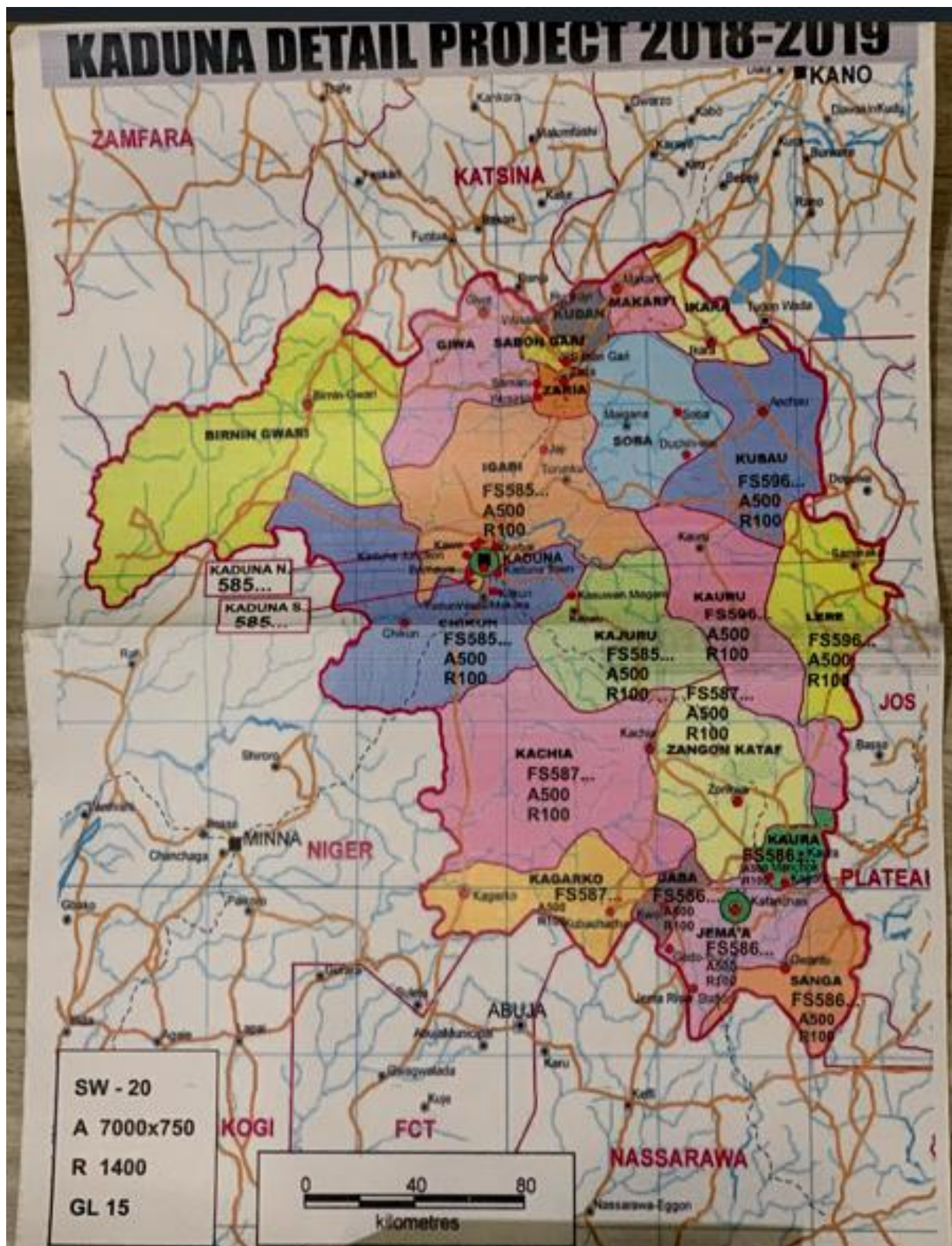
Abdallah JM Baikie
Director
Int'l Org. for Peacebuilding & Social Justice
Jos, Nigeria

Cc:

- The Honourable Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abuja
- The Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abuja
- U.S. Senator Ted Cruz, United States Senate
- U.S. Senator Ted Budd, United States Senate
- U.S. Senator Josh Hawley, United States Senate
- U.S. Senator Pete Ricketts, United States Senate
- U.S. Senator James Lankford, United States Senate
- U.S. Secretary of State, Hon. Marco Rubio
- U.S. Congressman Chris Smith, Chairman, House Subcommittee on Africa
- U.S. Congressman Tom Cole, Chairman, House Appropriations Committee
- U.S. Congressman Riley Moore
- U.S. Congressman Marlin Stutzman

Attachments:







PIDI

CAC/IT/NO.54311

PRISON INMATE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

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Ref: PIDI/AMD/HQ: 002/VOL: 013/2017

Date: 5th June, 2015

The Commissioner of Police,
Nigeria Police Force,
Bauchi States Headquarter.
Bauchi.

Sir,

**RE: COMPLAIN AGAINST BAUCHI STATE SHARI'AH COMMISSION AND
DA'AWAH COUNCIL COMMITTEE FOR THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF
SIMA SAMAILA EMMANUEL (UMMI SALMA SULE) TO HER
MATRIMONIAL HOME AT MIYA, GANJUWA L.G.A BAUCHI STATE.**

PIDI which is formally known as Prison Inmate Development Initiative was registered as non-governmental and non-profit making organization on 10th July 2012 to dig deeper into reason why cases of human rights violation is continuously on increase in Nigeria. To drive at change we worked with groups of networks within and outside Nigeria to promote access to justice and to serve as wrong finders, whistle blowers and agents of change in society through collaborations and affiliations with Government, National and International human rights groups to objectively look into universal declaration of human rights and constitutional rights of the less vulnerable groups more especially women and children. Our strategies alliance is strongly built in Educations, Rehabilitations, Social Work and Crime Management for Good Governance.

We have been briefed and our humanitarian services retained by Samaila Emmanuel the husband of Sima (Ummi Salma Sule) here in referred to the "Complainant" as annex whom Shari'ah Commission wrote to in a letter with Ref No. BAS/SC/NCTI/065/VOL.1 DATED 26th day of May, 2017. It is the brief of Mr. Emmanuel that Sima is his legally married wife and she is three (3) months pregnant for him, that on the 25th day of May or there about he discovered that Sima through the connivance and conspirators that took her from her matrimonial home in Miya and brought her to Shari'a commission Bauchi, wherein they kept her without the knowledge and consent of her husband or parents, which is criminal callous Barbaric and unethical. The woman in question is 16 years Old legally married who ought not to have been kept under the Bauchi State Sharia Commission custody against her wish as well as that of her husband and the parents.

Human Rights Are Inalienable!! Equal chance and Equal Rights for All!!!

Be that as it may we demand for the immediate release and return of the woman to her husband forthwith, otherwise we will promptly explore all petitions avenues within the shortest time possible, those involved, Sharia commission & Da'awah Committee for being an accomplices for kidnapping, abduction and enticement of the lady in question.

Take Note: this Issue is before the Human Rights Agenda Network (HRAN) and the Intentional Communities as well.

Thanks for anticipated cooperation.

Yours in the service for humanity,



Mbami Iliya Sabka.

(Human Rights Defender)

Executive Director (PIDI)

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