

PERSECUTION



THE DEADLIEST PLACE IN THE WORLD FOR CHRISTIANS

A SPECIAL REPORT ON NIGERIA

STOLEN ORPHANS

What happens when the government wrongly kidnaps orphans?

REFUGE AMONG RUINS

After Fulani militants burn down a village, one house remains standing.

SILENCE SPEAKS

When global leaders refuse to speak up, we refuse to remain silent.

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**"WE ARE HARD PRESSED
ON EVERY SIDE,
BUT NOT CRUSHED;
PERPLEXED, BUT NOT IN
DESPAIR; PERSECUTED,
BUT NOT ABANDONED;
STRUCK DOWN, BUT NOT
DESTROYED."**

2 CORINTHIANS 4:8-9

A REFRAIN OF PAIN

NIGERIAN CHRISTIANS DESPERATELY CRY FOR HELP

DEAR FRIEND,

As you may know, I've been serving the persecuted for 18 years. And while my heart, passion, and resolve are stronger than ever, I'm angered by what I see repeatedly taking place in Nigeria.

Simply said, enough is enough! With up to 100,000 Christians murdered over the last 20 years and 3 million plus left homeless, you have to ask, what will it take to make the Nigerian government protect its Christians? And when will the U.S. and other foreign governments step in and hold Nigeria accountable?

At ICC, we receive reports almost weekly from the field that include the most horrific videos and images you'd ever see. It's sickening. Our staff is often the first to arrive on the scene

It breaks the Lord's heart. And I know it breaks yours, too.

The attacks against Christians now happen mostly in Nigeria's Middle Belt region since most Christians in the north have been murdered or driven out. Whether in the north or the Middle Belt, it's armed Islamic terrorists responsible for the killing

Our goal is to call out Nigeria, where the government has ignored a 20-year guerrilla war against Christians, and enables and abets the Islamists doing the killing.

We won't stop aiding our hurting brothers and sisters, fighting for them in the halls of Congress, or sharing their stories with the world. We won't back down until justice is served.

We are inspired by these steadfast Christians in Nigeria. Their faith is marked by resilience, endurance, and an ever-present hope that can only be found in Christ.

In the following pages, you will get a glimpse of recent persecution in Nigeria and ICC's efforts to respond.

Thank you for your faithful support of our ministry and for standing by our side as we do what needs to be done in Africa and beyond.

God bless,



JEFF KING

President: International Christian Concern
Author: *The Last Words of the Martyrs* and
Islam Uncensored



YOUR DOLLARS AT WORK

ICC'S ONGOING INITIATIVES



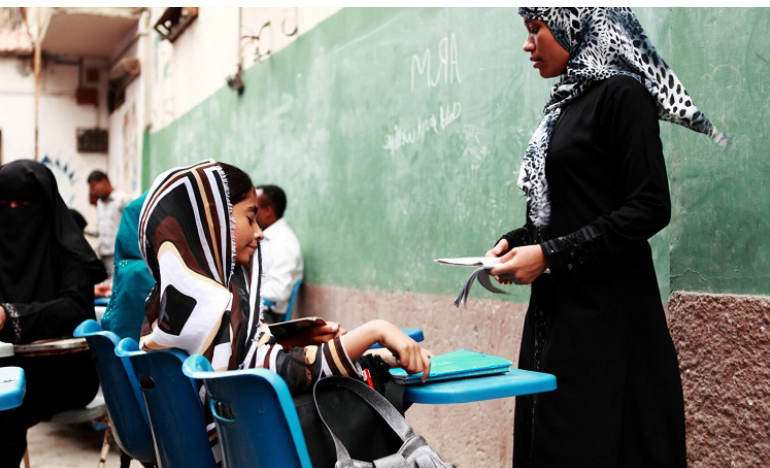
Afghanistan Crisis

Last August, ICC called upon its supporters to help rescue Afghan Christians in danger following the rise of the Taliban. One way we support this community is through legal aid. Those who have escaped to neighboring countries still find themselves at risk of forced deportation if they are discovered by the authorities. We are helping these refugees find the resources they need to legally settle in their new countries with safeguards to prevent them from being sent back to Afghanistan.



Hope House

ICC's Hope House program allows Christian children in Egypt to obtain educational support to help give them opportunities that their Muslim counterparts receive. In addition to this educational training, we also provide the children with weekly discipleship through a local church to encourage their spiritual development. When they inevitably encounter persecution, this mentorship will give them the foundation to remain strong in their faith despite the storms that come.



Generation Transformation

In 2020, ICC developed a bold initiative to pour support into one persecuted community, equipping participants with educational support, vocational training, and small business grants. Among those in the program are young adults who were orphaned years ago during a church attack. We have been providing them with educational assistance throughout the years and now have the privilege of helping them with the cost of college once they graduate high school.

To learn more about how you can support these initiatives, visit www.persecution.org or give us a call at 800-422-5441.



CLOTHED IN STRENGTH AND DIGNITY

Adam and his family have faced one trial after another. Due to kidney problems, Adam had to undergo a kidney transplant in 2010. He has been unable to work throughout the years because of the surgery and ongoing medications.

Making matters far worse, in 2014, Adam and his family had to flee their hometown when ISIS seized control of Iraq. Despite his medical condition, he and his family slept in public parks, church yards, and caravans

until it was finally safe enough to return. He recalled, “Living in caravans was not good for me. We had a shared bath and as a person suffering from health issues, it was very hard.”

Upon returning home, Adam was devastated to learn that he would have to rebuild from the ground up. He shared, “Our house was looted and destroyed; infrastructures were totally not working. Since that day till now, there is huge improvement, but still

not enough.”

During their displacement, Adam sold clothing in a meager space to survive.

ICC came alongside this family during their season of hardship. Staff helped renovate a shop for Adam to expand his clothing business. He can now support himself and his parents in a dignified way for years to come.



WEST WATCH

ISSUES INVOLVING CHRISTIANITY IN THE WEST



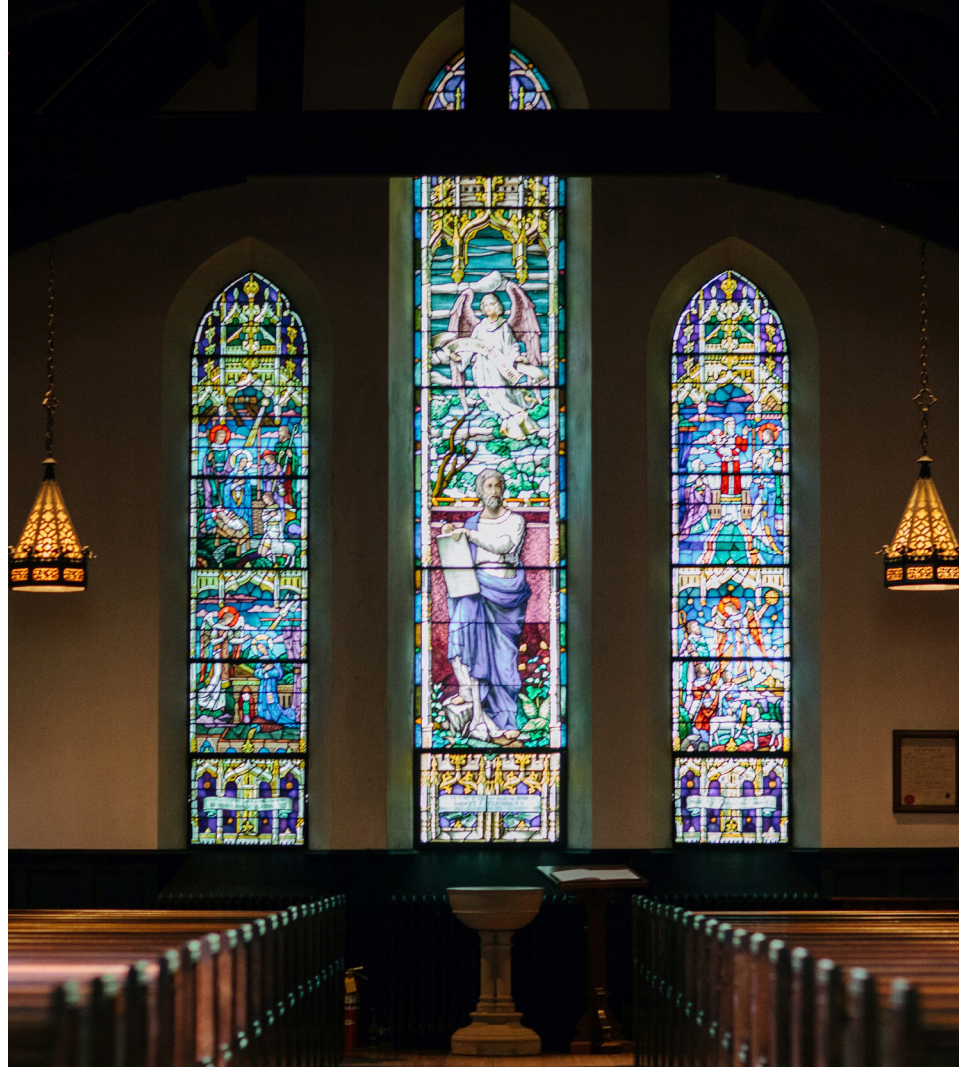
PERSECUTION IN THE WEST?

West Watch seeks to share with you glimpses of issues involving Christianity in the Western world.

So often, ICC's content focuses on where we see persecution in its most extreme forms—murder, rape, torture, and imprisonment. Those who experience and endure these forms of persecution will always be at the forefront of our ministry mission.

However, ICC stands for religious freedom for everyone, everywhere. When we see religious freedom being violated, especially in the “free world,” we call it out.

West Watch highlights some of the issues ICC's advocacy team spots in Europe and North America—places where the persecution of religious groups doesn't make headlines.



UK Government Excludes Prayer from Conversion Therapy Ban

Following a campaign by British Christians over proposals to ban conversion therapy in England and Wales, the UK government released a statement saying that prayer will be excluded from the ban. The government is seeking to ban

conversion therapy, a practice in which a person receives counseling for unwanted same-sex attraction. Supporters of the ban have been campaigning for it to extend within churches, while its opponents see it as a violation of religious freedom.



Scottish Financial Trust Apologizes for Discriminating Against Christian Groups

Scotland's largest grant-making trust apologized in December 2021 to two Christian groups for unlawful religious discrimination, according to the Christian Institute.

This latest settlement, made by

the Robertson Trust, is part of a greater controversy in the UK where numerous event venues canceled events that were part of the Billy Graham Evangelical Association's (BGEA) tour of the country with Rev. Franklin Graham.

Court Rules That Maryland Illegally Discriminated Against Christian School in Voucher Program

A federal district court recently ruled in favor of Bethel Christian Academy in a discrimination case against Maryland. The state government tried to prevent state scholarship money from being used for tuition at Bethel. The government

also sought to get back more than \$100,000 in scholarship money because of Bethel's affirmation of traditional biblical marriage and sexuality. With this ruling, Bethel will once again be eligible to receive the state scholarship funding.



Christian Schools to Participate in Lawsuit Defending Use of Federal Loans at Christian Colleges

In October, a federal district court granted a motion from three Christian schools to join a lawsuit threatening to significantly defund U.S. Christian colleges and universities. An LGBT activist group, called the Religious Exemption Accountability Project (REAP), filed

the lawsuit, *Hunter v. U.S. Dept. of Education*, in March 2021. These Christian schools will now join the defense of religious exemptions allowing Christian colleges promoting biblical definitions of marriage and sexuality to receive federal student loans.

**WEARY SOULS AND
ANGRY CRIES FOR
HELP WEARY SOULS
AND ANGRY CRIES
FOR HELP WEARY
SOULS AND ANGRY
CRIES FOR HELP
WEARY SOULS AND
ANGRY CRIES FOR
HELP WEARY SOULS
AND ANGRY CRIES
FOR HELP**

TO NO AVAIL

By Mike Anderson

Atrocities against Christians in Nigeria are nothing new. Yet, the Nigerian government and the world have turned a blind eye as bodies pile up.

Almost anywhere on the planet, if a marauding herd of bandits killed innocent civilians and burned down their homes, it would make worldwide headlines. The government would step in, troops and security would bring peace, and justice would prevail.

But in Nigeria? Crickets.

Time and time again, hundreds of radical Islamic Fulani herdsmen steal into Christian homes in the dark of night and bludgeon entire farming communities. The lucky ones flee with their offspring into the bush, cross rivers, or somehow escape. Traumatized by the gunfire and machetes and murderous screams, survivors eventually return to their villages, only to find their houses and possessions in flames and lifeless loved ones splayed in the dirt under the stars.

The numbers are staggering. Estimates (depending on the source) of 50 thousand, 70 thousand, or 100 thousand Christians killed over the past 20 years. More than two million displaced. Lives cut short. Cries of pain squelched by government indifference. No arrests. Just silence from officials and military rulers.

One would think this would move the international community to intervene. Instead, leaders of other countries give the issue mostly lip service. They hold meetings and pen terse diplomatic responses behind closed oak doors, thankful that the quagmire is on distant shores. Many are influenced by Nigeria's leaders, who employ their propaganda machine and downplay the killings as mostly small, complicated territorial disputes between factious tribes.

Days pass after the murders. The dust settles. Life returns to its rhythm and other news takes center stage.

Nigeria's Christians, however, pick up their charred belongings, mass bury the dead, and march on. They fend for themselves and each other, rebuild, and cling to Christ. Many spend fearful, sleepless nights, not knowing if or when there will be another attack. Despair rattles their weary bones.

ICC will continue to fight for Nigeria's persecuted Christians. Its biggest impact to date is launching approximately 20 communal farms that provide long-term sustenance for thousands of people. The ministry has also rebuilt homes, provided direct aid after an attack including food and clothing, and paid for medical expenses. It has resettled widows and helped them launch small businesses to survive without their breadwinners. ICC will soon start a Christ-centered trauma counseling program. Most importantly, ICC staff and volunteers have loved, hugged, and prayed with survivors.

In November, ICC named Nigeria the worst offender for countries in its recently released, comprehensive, 140-page report: 2021 Persecutor of the Year Awards (to see the report, visit persecution.org/POY).

Shockingly and ironically, a day later, the U.S. Department of State took Nigeria off its list of troublesome countries. ICC will continue to rattle the halls of Congress and make the world aware of the plight of Christians in Nigeria until more is done.

The most important role ICC and Christians around the globe can play, however, is to let their hurting brothers and sisters know that they are not forgotten. They have not been abandoned. To stand by their side. And to support and pray for them.

It is an ongoing quest that shows no quick end or salve for the hurting Nigerian soul. 

FRUITFUL FARMLANDS

ICC works to restore the devastation caused by Fulani militants into flourishing farming communities.

By Sarah Thomas

Persecution in Nigeria is a stain woven deep into the cultural fabric of the country.

Nigeria is the largest killing ground of Christians today and the nation that received ICC's 2021 Persecutor of the Year Award for the country with the worst record of Christian persecution. However, it goes far deeper than that.

Since 2001, Fulani militants have attacked Christian farming villages in Nigeria's Middle Belt region—where the Muslim north meets the Christian south—displacing millions of Christians and leaving them without reliable access to food.

The overwhelming consensus is that this is largely a conflict over land, as the arid zones in Nigeria have been increasingly moving southward. But to leave the narrative at that is simply irresponsible.

While farmer-herder conflicts have existed for centuries, a more sinister element emerged within the last few decades, fueled by a jihadist agenda.

This is what the Nigerian government refuses to acknowledge, and what Christians in Nigeria have spent years trying to communicate to the international community.

ICC, as well as a number of other organizations, recognize the violence as religiously motivated. Fulani militants have not only attacked farms, they have also destroyed churches and specifically targeted Christian communities.

To alleviate the situation for displaced Christians in Nigeria suffering from food insecurity, ICC began its Nigeria Farms initiative in 2018. To implement the farms, ICC rents land through the local government or village chief. The land cost is typically either free or minimal. ICC clears the land, plows it, and then provides seed, fertilizer, and herbicide to the displaced farmers.

ICC has established 20 communal farms. Each farm provides one year's worth of food and revenue for 75 families—totaling 400-600 people. The project is implemented by ICC's local staff in Nigeria and coordinated with the community chiefs. Each farm has a local project manager to oversee day-to-day operations.

The farms have been received with joy and gladness of heart. But they have not been without their struggles.

The farm in Bokkos suffered setbacks, including Fulani militants' destruction of 10 hectares of farmland and irregular rainfall across the farm. Another ten hectares of land were lost at the hands of Fulani militants on the Kajuru farm.

Despite these difficulties, the farms proved fruitful for the communities. The trajectory of families' futures has been changed because of the farms. The following pages detail real testimonies from farm beneficiaries. ✝





***I WAS THINKING THIS
LIFE IS NOT WORTH
LIVING, BUT MY HOPE
IS REGAINED BECAUSE
OF THIS FARM
PROJECT.***



- Asabe Anas, Barkin Ladi farm



//
**BY THE GRACE OF GOD,
 I WILL NO LONGER BE
 BEGGING FOR FOOD
 AGAIN BECAUSE OF
 THIS FARM PROJECT.**

Kajah Tegwi, Barkin Ladi farm

//
**[THE FARMS] HELPED
 ME REGAIN MY
 HOPE IN GOD. MY
 LIFE HAS CHANGED
 ECONOMICALLY AND
 SPIRITUALLY.**

Francis Turu Sunday, Bassa farm



//
**I AM NO LONGER IDLE
 BECAUSE OF THIS
 FARMING PROJECT.
 THIS WILL SERVE AS A
 FOUNDATION FOR ME
 AND MY FAMILY TO
 BUILD ON.**

Simon Mabweh, Bokkos farm





**NOW WE HAVE HOPE
KNOWING THERE ARE
CHRISTIAN BRETHREN
THAT LOVE AND CARE.**

Samuel Magiti, Bokkos farm



**I WILL NO LONGER
SUFFER HUNGER NEXT
YEAR.**

Ester Thomas



**IF THIS FARM PROJECT
CONTINUES, I WILL
BE ABLE TO TRAIN MY
CHILDREN AT SCHOOL
WITHOUT STRUGGLE.**

Jummai Rozji, Bassa farm



OVERCOMING FLOODS AND THE FULANI

ICC provides farming equipment for a community affected by devastating Fulani militant attacks.

By Mike Anderson

For the past three years, ICC has brought a wellspring of hope to families and a land that's harbored great suffering. Near a riverbend of the Gongola River in Nigeria, ICC launched three, 20-acre irrigation farms of rice that sustain 225 families, or more than 1,500 men, women, and children.







Many of the locals, nearly all Christians in this Middle Belt region, bear emotional and physical scars from Fulani militant attacks.

Most have lost some semblance of life. Breadwinners of families were struck down, leaving widows with mouths to feed and few means to do so. Survivors hobbled with injuries. They are the most vulnerable, yet are warriors who don't run from tragedy. Whenever the Fulani swept through their communities in multiple attacks since 2016, they rose to rebuild.

Traditional farming near the opulent, sun-kissed soil has carried its risks. The river would often flood during the rainy season and sweep away rewards of the back-breaking harvest. Or the Fulani would destroy the fragile crops just before the yield, attracted to the same fertile ground to nourish their oxen. The floods and Fulani were never welcome guests.

While instability has punctuated much of the landscape, calm waters flow under the surface. With ICC's financial help, locals tapped the ample wells to bathe the rice fields with a steady stream of goodness. With the Fulani out of the area and to higher ground during the rainy season, the farms could draw a consistent and unhindered bounty no matter the weather or threat.

"It's a huge support that has rebuilt the human dignity of the farmers; rather than handing out food packets which should





be temporary, the farms have provided a sustainable livelihood and have made a huge difference in the communities,” said one local ICC staffer. While ICC provided the resources and means, the locals live on and work the farms which is a great boost to morale. “The farms have helped stabilize and restore the sense of human worth of the families.”

It’s hard for Westerners to understand the depth and breadth of Nigerian suffering, nor the life-altering sacrifices borne in tragedy. Or appreciate the resilience and gratitude of the people who are so thankful for the support, and this hallowed rice-strewn ground.

“When this intervention came, people were so excited,” said the ICC staffer who oversees the irrigation farms.

“There was one woman who was so excited, she wanted to give ICC something because ICC brought life for us. People came all the way from the U.S. to help because of God. So, this God who planted the people in this area will always provide for them. They are always so excited about the whole project.”

ICC will continue to explore ways to assist the farmers and expand the fields. If the militants continue to ravage the land, there will be the wounded who need long-term care.

“I’m glad to serve my people and do God’s work,” said the ICC staffer. “I enjoy what I’m doing because I’m making an impact on my people. God has a way of doing things; He brought me here to help.” ✝

//
[THIS PROJECT]
HAS REBUILT
THE HUMAN
DIGNITY OF THE
FARMERS.

- Local ICC Staffer

PHOTOS: Truckloads of materials arrive with irrigation equipment to help reduce flooding on the farm. Many farmers lose their crops to the ruthless floods or menacing Fulani militants.

HEARTBREAK IN TE'EGBE

After 100 houses burned to the ground and 10 were people killed, all that remains is blood-stained concrete and ash.

By Mike Anderson

On Friday, Nov. 26, rumors swirled of an impending Fulani militia attack on the Nigerian Middle Belt village of Te'egbe.

Six soldiers guarded the complex, and Yari, one of the villagers, joined them on patrol.

The Fulani herdsmen had already ravaged the region, home to the mostly Christian Irigwe people, killing hundreds and displacing thousands. Te'egbe had become a city of refuge for uprooted Irigwe from as far south as the Kaduna villages that border Plateau State.

The Ambush

The first gunfire pierced the night's calm around 1:00 a.m., according to Yari and the soldiers. One witness said the attackers positioned three machine guns and started firing indiscriminately toward the village.

Panic ensued.

While some women and children were sent elsewhere earlier, those who remained fled into the darkness.

"We responded with gunfire, but the attackers were overwhelming," said Yari.

//
**SIX OF [MY
FAMILY
MEMBERS]
WERE IN THE
SAME ROOM
AND WERE
ALL SHOT TO
DEATH.**

- Jonathan, Te'egbe villager





“As they attempted to surround us, we had to flee...to avoid getting trapped.”

The Devastation

An estimated 500 radical Fulani militants descended on Te'egbe in the assault that lasted about three hours. Witnesses said the attackers wore black and shouted, ‘Allahu Akbar’ (Allah is the greatest). The militants killed 10 villagers and set more than 100 homes on fire, displacing roughly 700 people.

“My father was killed in the attack,” said Jonathan. “We were asleep around 1:00 a.m. when we heard gunshots. Our old father was sick and indoors. My mother, my stepmother, and my mother’s relative had come to care for my father, along with two grandchildren. Six of them were in the same room and were all shot to death.”

A Genocide of Christians

An ICC staffer who navigated the area and interviewed survivors said the attacks “are an attempt to eat more into the major Irigwe communities, to weaken their self defense and push them out of the land so that the herdsmen, who are nomadic, will have more space for the cattle to graze. The attacks are aimed at weakening the resilience of the community, and to impoverish them.”

He and others characterize the attacks against the Christian farmers as ethnic cleansing and genocide.

“If they can destroy your food source, then starvation sets in,” said the ICC staffer. “If they destroy your home, they displace the individuals. They incapacitate you economically and life becomes unbearable. So, the communities have no choice but to succumb to the wishes of the herdsmen.” 



A HOLISTIC APPROACH

To combat generational trauma that Nigerian Christians have faced over the last several decades, ICC is launching a trauma counseling program. The program will provide trauma healing workshops to 300 Nigerian victims of trauma. The program will also train ICC partners, representatives, and Nigerian NGOs to deliver trauma-informed care.

ICC has been working with traumatized populations in Nigeria since we started providing aid in the country. While ICC works to bandage and restore persecuted communities through farms and small businesses, it’s also important to address the mental health effects of persecution.

LEFT: After Fulani militants attacked Te'egbe in the middle of a November night, the devastation could be seen on the blood-stained floors where a family was killed.

ABOVE: Fulani militants burned down 100 houses in the village. The charred remains stand as a reminder of the blazing fire that lit up the night during the religiously motivated attack.



A REFUGE AMONG THE RUINS

After Fulani militants burn down a village, one house remains standing.

While about 100 homes were burned to the ground in the Fulani melee, there was one notable exception—the house that ICC rebuilt three years prior.

Fulani militants attacked Te'egbe in 2018 on a smaller scale, killing five members of one Christian family and burning their house to the ground. ICC responded quickly to the scene, documented the crimes, and shared the family's story with the world. ICC donors heard of the tragedy and stepped in to help rebuild.

The rebuilt house had 11 small rooms and could accommodate about 25 people. For the past three years, several soldiers occupied the dwelling.

In the most recent attack, Fulani militants took dried harvested crops that were piled outside and brought them indoors to set on fire. Aside from minor damage to ceiling tiles, however, the home was spared and will

continue to serve as a refuge for survivors.

Though we can't ignore the tragedy of the 100 other homes that were lost, the one home left standing reminds us that God is our refuge, no matter where we call home on this earth.

Psalm 32:7 declares this truth, "You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. Later in the book, the psalmist writes, "You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word," in Psalm 119:114.

The best place to be when facing fear and uncertainty is always with God. He is our hiding place and refuge who sings songs of deliverance over us. Our brothers and sisters in Nigeria know this deep down.

Just like the house left standing amid the devastation, we can turn to God when destruction and sorrow are all around us. ✝️



TOP: The house ICC helped rebuild after a 2018 attack was the only house left standing after Fulani militants attacked Te'egbe village.

BOTTOM: Fulani militants etched a message into the village wall after an attack. Read more in the right sidebar.

A PICTURE OF HATE WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

While the Fulani militants murdered innocent villagers and burned down homes, they also left graffiti behind that clearly stated their intentions, essentially saying:

"We, the Fulani herdsmen have overpowered and disgraced the Irigwe (Miango) ethnic group. We are pleading with the Nigerian Army to allow us more space to inflict maximum damages so that the Fulani would continue to dominate."

This statement makes it clear that the Fulani herdsmen (via their militia) are attacking the Irigwe communities, and they would do more if the Nigerian military didn't get in their way.

Other mostly Christian communities across central Nigeria have suffered similar brutal attacks by the Fulani militants. Like the recent attack on Te'egbe, rarely is anyone apprehended by Nigerian security forces.



AN ATTACK ON THEIR *LIVELIHOODS*

Two families experience devastating loss.

By Kate Piselli

On the morning of October 15, 2021, 12-year-old Emmanuel Amos joined his eight-year-old brother, Abednego, and their father, David, on a trip to visit their farm.

Their farmland was in Nkiedonwro, a village they were forced to flee in 2017 when Fulani militants brutally massacred 29 of their community members.

For the last four years, Emmanuel and his family often returned to the deserted land during the day to cultivate their crops. At the sight of nightfall, however, they retreated back to safety to avoid the militia that killed so many of their peers.



But as the group traveled on this particular morning, the visibility of daylight did little to hinder the motives of the militants.

Emboldened by a historical lack of retribution, the jihadists intercepted the convoy in broad daylight and began shooting indiscriminately.

Abednego and David were instantly killed. Emmanuel was rushed to the hospital, where he survived his gunshot wounds.

The trusted driver of the group and a close friend of an ICC representative in Nigeria, 28-year-old Reuben Sunday, was also shot dead.

Reuben is survived by his wife, Abigail, and

their four children, ranging from four months to nine years in age.

Abednego and David left behind not only Emmanuel, but also their mother and wife, Laria, and six other children.

Sadly, thousands of Nigerian Christians are grieving such losses as their family members continue to be murdered in staggering numbers.

Despite the clear targeting of Christians in these attacks, the Nigerian government, as well as the international community, refuse to acknowledge the genocidal factors at play.

ICC was able to alleviate some of the financial burden resulting from the loss of

Reuben, David, and little Abednego. But most survivors, often losing their family's breadwinner as well as their livelihood in these attacks, are left without assistance. ✝️

LEFT: A pastor provides aid for widows and their families with ICC aid during a church service.

TOP RIGHT: ICC provided grinding machines and food aid to ease the financial burden when the families lost their breadwinners.

BOTTOM RIGHT: A photo of Emmanuel, the 12-year-old who was shot, and his mother, Laria.

A SPIRITUAL WASTELAND

Islamist militants shut down churches and threaten ferocious attacks. This is the plight of Christians in northern Nigeria.

By Kate Piselli

The events leading up to the death of Reverend Shuaibu Yohanna are inconceivable for most Westerners.

But for Christians in northern Nigeria, such occurrences have become commonplace.

The reverend was assaulted in September 2021, in a village in Nigeria's northeastern state of Kano. A Christian convert in the village had recently killed a woman, and while he was not a practicing Christian, extreme Muslims assumed that Christianity was the cause of the murder.

The uprising that ensued from the Muslim community forced Yohanna to flee the area. He came back, however, when he felt the

need to protect the students at the Christian school he had founded.

While on his way to evacuate the school, a mob of Islamic extremists attacked Yohanna, and macheted him to death.

The north is the stronghold of Islam in Nigeria, and 12 northern states have adopted criminal Sharia law. This has led to discrimination against Christians at an unprecedented level and given extremist groups the courage to act out against minorities.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of pastors have been threatened, targeted, and killed by jihadists over the past decade, often leaving behind grieving families without any means

of income.

Most recently, in December 2021, extremists sent a threatening letter to Christians in northern Zamfara state, telling them to close all churches and stop worship or risk "ferocious attacks." With little confidence for protection from their Muslim-led government, believers were forced to relocate or take their faith underground.

This left pastors, who depend on the tithes of congregants as their salary, with no means to provide for their families.

In December 2021, ICC paid for emergency packages that were distributed to 150 pastors or their widows in six of Nigeria's

ELAND



northern states. Families that lost their breadwinners, like Reverend Yoanna's family, as well as pastors who lost their income received various food items, hygienic products, clothes, and a financial support for their entire family.

With your help, and through God's provision, ICC will continue to seek out and serve Christians who are truly amongst the most persecuted in the world. ✝

RIGHT: Reverend Shuaibu Yohanna before and after the attack that took his life. ICC obtained permission from the reverend's family to show him in the hospital.



ORPHANED BUT NOT ABANDONED

What happens when the government wrongly kidnaps all the children from a Christian orphanage?

By Kate Piselli

Professor Tarfa and his wife, Mercy, founded Du Merci orphanage in Nigeria's Kano State in 1996. For over two decades, the couple rescued abandoned children with the mission "to glorify God by ministering to orphans and vulnerable children by meeting their mental, physical, spiritual and social needs."

On Christmas Day 2019, a team of policemen raided the orphanage, arrested Professor Tarfa without bail, and transferred 27 children to government-run facilities. Despite Mercy providing all the necessary documentation, the government declared that the orphanage was unregistered and shut it down.

"The police kept me in their cell for 41 days and in prison for about one year without taking me to court," Professor Tarfa told ICC, "I was locked up for no crime but for operating a Christian orphanage."

Once situated in their new government-run facilities, the Du Merci children report that their hosts bathed them, changed their original names to Muslim Hausa names, and began taking them to daily Muslim prayers and Quranic teachings. "Emmanuel's name was changed to Ismail, Destiny to Samaila, Mercy to Amina, Martha to Khadijat, Esther to Fatima," a source close to the case told ICC.





The children were not allowed to leave the premises to attend school or church and complained of being mistreated for their religious beliefs. Several incidents of violence and neglect ensued, including one occasion when the government facility abandoned two Du Merci children suffering from chronic conditions at a private hospital.

How could such blatant injustice occur within a country professing religious tolerance?

Kano State is governed by Islamic Sharia law, despite the federal government claiming to be secular. When a religion takes over the government, as it has in much of Nigeria's north, it creates a social and judicial hierarchy along religious lines and makes religious minorities, in this case Christians, suffer due to their lack of conformity.

ICC has been in contact with Professor Tarfa throughout his case. While he thanks God for the return of some of his children and the addition of new ones, the financial burden accumulated over the years has been a source of extreme anxiety. "We have been subjected to hardship for nearly

two years," he said, "depleting our resources and compounding the children's sufferings."

In response, ICC has partnered with Du Merci to implement a feeding program. Just two dollars a day provides three nutritious and well-balanced meals for each child.

"The kids were overwhelmed and full of joy. It's something they never experienced. Previously we had to solicit for little to cater for a week. It's awesome!!!" said Professor Solomon, the head of the orphanage.

Our hope is to show these children that while their government has thrust them into insecurity, they are secured in God's love. Their Christian family cares about them, is praying for them, and is united with them through love. ✝

FAR LEFT: Food after it was delivered to the orphanage.

LEFT: Professor Tarfa and Mercy, his wife, when they first started the orphanage in 1996.

ABOVE: Some of the Du Merci children who have participated in the supplemental feeding program.

An Unwelcome Designation

ICC works with Congress to share the religious freedom violations from the government in Nigeria

By Jay Church

When the U.S. Department of State designated Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) in December 2020, human rights groups around the world celebrated. The designation followed many years of civil society advocacy and signified that the U.S. was beginning to recognize the tragedy of religious persecution in Nigeria.

It came as a surprise when the Department of State took Nigeria off the CPC list in November 2021, just three days before Secretary of State Antony Blinken landed in Abuja, Nigeria for diplomatic talks and after a year of extreme violence against Nigerian Christians.

After the announcement, ICC's advocacy team quickly swung into action to help Congress push back against the Department of State's decision to delist Nigeria.

ICC, along with its partners at ADF International and Open Doors USA, helped Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) draft a letter to the Department of State calling for an explanation and asking that Nigeria be added back to the CPC list. ICC's advocacy team also published a report, No Protest Allowed, profiling one of Nigeria's most prolific government persecutors and hosted a webinar to inform D.C. stakeholders about the issue of government persecution in Nigeria.

At the webinar, the featured speaker was Rev. John Joseph Hayab, a Baptist minister and the leader of the Christian Association of Nigeria in Kaduna State. He met with Secretary of State Antony Blinken just a few days after the delisting and told attendees about that meeting.

"I told him, 'The U.S. taking Nigeria off the CPC list is like a doctor expelling a sick patient from the hospital before he is well,'" Rev. Hayab said. "You are sending him out to die."

ICC will continue to push leaders in D.C. to recognize the persecution happening in Nigeria and take appropriate action in response. ✝️







TAKING ACTION IN CONGRESS

ICC Honors US Senator James Lankford for Advancing Religious Freedom

ICC President Jeff King honored U.S. Senator James Lankford (R-OK) with the Hero on the Hill Award last fall for the senator's global efforts to defend religious freedom. Lankford has been a champion for faith and a friend to the persecuted.

King presented the award to Lankford, an outspoken advocate for persecuted communities and the first Senate recipient of the distinguished award.

While ICC works in trouble spots like Nigeria to help persecuted Christians, its 10 Washington, D.C. analysts educate and advise U.S. government leaders on persecution issues. In turn, stakeholders like Lankford use the power and influence of the U.S. government to pressure foreign leaders to respect religious freedom and hold violators accountable.

Allies like Lankford are crucial to ICC's mission to relieve the suffering of the worldwide persecuted Church.

"ICC is grateful to have Senator Lankford as a long-term ally in Congress," said King. "The senator has a passion for helping persecuted Christians and has been a leader in Congress for advancing religious freedoms around the globe. We hope to see more members of Congress follow suit and hold leaders of oppressive regimes accountable for their crimes."

Lankford pushed legislation and supported initiatives to advance religious freedom as a fundamental right, and spearheaded bills to hold Iran and China accountable for their abuses of minority religious communities. He also co-chaired this year's International Religious Freedom Summit, which brought together members of different faith communities to address rising persecution around the world. Lankford introduced a resolution to call for the global repeal of blasphemy, heresy, and apostasy laws, which was passed unanimously last year.

"In our nation, we have the right to have a faith, live that faith, and change our faith without persecution from our government," said Lankford. "We should stand up for the rights of any person in any nation to also live their faith, change their faith, or to have no faith. Nations with blasphemy, heresy, and apostasy laws designed to persecute people of faith must end."

Lankford served four years in the U.S. House of Representatives for central Oklahoma, until his election to the U.S. Senate in 2014. Before his stint in Congress, Lankford served students and families for more than 20 years in ministry, including 15 years as the Director of Student Ministry for the Baptist Convention of Oklahoma and Director of the Falls Creek Youth Camp.

ICC will continue to work with Lankford and congressional leaders in combating the persecution of Christians throughout the world. ✝

Jeff King, president of International Christian Concern, recently presented U.S. Sen. James Lankford (R-OK) with the ICC Hero on the Hill Award for the senator's defense of religious freedom worldwide. They were joined by ICC Director of Advocacy Mattias Perttula.



Senator Lankford has a passion for helping persecuted Christians and has been a leader in Congress for advancing religious freedoms around the globe.

- Jeff King, ICC President

A WINTER [ALMOST] WITHOUT WARMTH

ICC continues to help Afghan Christians in big and small.

By William Stark

In the wake of the disastrous U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, the highly secretive Christian community in the country began to experience a rapid increase in threats. For Christians, the weeks and months following the fall of Kabul to the Taliban on August 15 were the most frightening times in years.

Almost overnight, thousands of Afghan Christians were forced into the difficult decision of going into hiding or fleeing Afghanistan and the persecution bound to increase under Taliban rule.

Since the collapse of Afghanistan, International Christian Concern (ICC) has been helping Afghan Christians survive this extremely difficult situation. This includes providing safe houses in Afghanistan, food aid, medical assistance, and extractions to neighboring countries.

In many cases, Afghan Christians fleeing the country were forced to leave behind most of their worldly possessions.

“The families who escaped the country left without anything,” John*, an ICC partner in Afghanistan, recently explained. “We asked them not to carry much with them because they were fleeing the country in small cars. We also didn’t want them to look like they were fleeing the country if they were caught by the Taliban.”

For many families, this meant they carried little more than the clothing on their backs, perhaps a single change of clothes, official documents, and some food and water

for the long journey.

Recently, this became a major challenge for hundreds of Afghan Christians who fled to countries neighboring Afghanistan. With the onset of winter, these Christians found themselves without warm clothing to face the harsh winter conditions.

“Almost everyone was struggling with the sudden change in weather,” John continued. “Many children were getting sick due to the lack of proper winter clothing.”

In response to this need, ICC provided winter clothing for hundreds of Christians who fled Afghanistan following the collapse of the country. These Christians received winter jackets, hats, and warm blankets.

“We did not have enough warm clothing,” a beneficiary of the project told ICC. “It was not easy to live in one room with the weather freezing cold.”

“I am thankful for the help, including the winter jacket and the blanket I was given,” the beneficiary continued. “These will keep me warm and provide me with peace of mind.”

For many Afghan Christians, they will continue to face a long journey to safety and security following the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan. While this journey will be long and full of many challenges, ICC remains committed to supporting this persecuted Christian community. ✝️

**Name changed for security*



ABOUT THE PHOTOS:

Due to the highly sensitive nature of this issue, ICC representatives were only allowed to take a few photos on camera phones.

ICC distributes warm clothing to Afghan refugees to keep them warm during the coming winter. When the Taliban took over in the summer, many had to flee with only the clothes on their backs.



"WE ASKED THEM NOT TO CARRY MUCH...WE DIDN'T WANT THEM TO LOOK LIKE THEY WERE FLEEING THE COUNTRY IF THEY WERE CAUGHT BY THE TALIBAN."

- JOHN, ICC REPRESENTATIVE



STAFF COLUMN

ON LOSING FREEDOM

ICC's Regional Manager for Southeast Asia compares her quarantine hotel experience to Christians in China who are often detained for 15 days for their faith.

By Gina Goh

Closing the door behind me, I bid farewell to freedom. At least temporarily.

I couldn't help but press my face against the peephole, knowing that this fish-eye lens would be my only view of the outside world for the next 15 days. No one would be able to see me, not even my loved ones. What is left is my solitude in this 215 square foot space.



Although this was my second time staying at a quarantine hotel in Taiwan, the lengthy isolation leaves much to be desired. I am only deemed a safe and sane person once I complete the required quarantine; I am only released back into society when they no longer considered me a threat.

My experience, however, is paradise compared to the Chinese Christians who are increasingly placed under administrative detention for their faith. After their arrest, they are subject to up to 15 days of incarceration to allow interrogation of suspects and to punish conduct not considered criminal, including “inciting illegal assembly.”

While the Chinese authorities adopt this measure to tackle crimes such as DUI, prostitution, robbery, or assault, house church Christians who refuse to leave their faith or churches and join the state-vetted church can be prosecuted in the same way.

Stripped of their freedom, they are placed in the detention center along with other inmates. Several detainees share a room and rudimentary toilet facilities with no privacy. They sleep on a thin mattress that must be rolled up during the day.

Patriotic songs and educational videos are played repeatedly during their daily routine. They are asked to take turns keeping watch of their fellow inmates in a stand-still position at night. Their “performance” is rated by the guards. Only those who have substantial points are allowed certain benefits, such as phone calls and purchasing power.

Looking down at my colorful and nutritious bento box and bubble tea sitting in front of a 40-inch flatscreen TV, I really have no ground to complain. Instead, I have only respect for these Christians who are not afraid to pay the price of freedom for their faith. ✝️

Top: Photo from the hotel Gina stayed in for quarantine in Taiwan.

Bottom: Photo inside the Chinese administrative detention facilities.



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