

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 25, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500-0005

Dear Mr. President:

We write today ahead of a U.S. Presidential Delegation to the Federal Republic of Nigeria to attend the inauguration of His Excellency Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

We request that the delegation reiterates strongly the United States' commitment to international religious freedom and address the ongoing violence and Islamic blasphemy laws that gravely impact Christians in Nigeria. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) once again recommended that Nigeria be designated as a Country of Particular Concern for "the systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom, as defined by the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA)."<sup>1</sup> However, the U.S. Department of State removed Nigeria from this designation list on November 30, 2022.

Despite Nigeria's 1999 Constitution protecting religious freedom and prohibiting the establishment of a state religion, Nigerian Criminal Code still has blasphemy laws on the books and as many as twelve Nigerian states use Islamic Sharia law alongside the criminal code. Nigeria is also the worst country in the world for violence against Christians, with more than 5,000 Christians killed in 2022, according to Open Doors. This represents nearly 90 percent of the total number of Christians killed worldwide in 2022. Further, the Islamic terrorist groups Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) continue to be responsible for the destruction of churches, kidnapping of Christian clergy, rape, and other atrocities. In the past, Nigerian authorities have routinely failed to investigate these attacks and when an investigation is initiated "the effectiveness of these efforts remained in question, while in some regions state and local officials failed to fully prosecute individuals who incited mob violence against alleged blasphemers,"<sup>2</sup> according to USCIRF's 2023 annual report.

The respect for international religious freedom is a bedrock of American foreign policy. It is critically important that your delegation raise these issues with Nigerian officials when they attend the inauguration of His Excellency Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration of this important issue.



Chris Smith  
Member of Congress

Sincerely,



French Hill  
Member of Congress

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<sup>1</sup> Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. April 2023. Pg 30.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 30.