Lawmakers Demand Action as Christians Face Rising Violence

The House Appropriations Committee and House Foreign Affairs Committee delivered a joint report concerning the persecution of Christians in Nigeria, finding that it is the "deadliest place in the world to be a Christian." Investigators from the committees engaged with witnesses, held roundtable discussions, and conducted on-the-ground assessments for the report.

In their report to the White House, the committees recommended that a bilateral agreement be struck between the United States and Nigeria to "protect vulnerable Christian communities from violent persecution, eliminate jihadist terror activity in the region, further economic cooperation, and counter adversaries in the region," including both the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Russian Federation. Lawmakers further urged the Trump administration to implement sanctions on those enabling and engaging in Christian persecution, threaten visa restrictions, and demand the end of sharia codes and anti-blasphemy laws, among several other recommendations.

House Appropriations Committee Chairman Tom Cole (R-OK) said religious freedom is a "cornerstone of America," proclaiming that the "call to protect faith and humanity does not fade with distance."

"Our joint report focuses on defending lives, upholding religious liberty, and stopping terrorists. We affirm a necessary duality, no matter where we are: we defend U.S. principles by enforcing security. We protect faith by dismantling terror," he said. "And we recognize that a world where believers are safe is not achieved through hope alone –

it is secured through vigilance that deters evil, confronts violence, and stands watch so prayer is never left undefended."

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House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Brian Mast (R-FL) similarly noted that the nation "will not turn a blind eye to Christian persecution."

During a November House Committee on Foreign Affairs hearing, Bureau of African Affairs Ambassador Jonathan Pratt declared that it is in the interest of the United States to "work with the Nigerian government on a plan of action to strengthen security for at-risk Christian communities and Nigerians of all faiths whose ability to practice their faith is put in jeopardy by endemic violence and terrorism."

Pratt explained that the Trump administration is developing a plan to "incentivize and compel the Nigerian government to better protect Christian communities and improve religious freedom." The plan will weigh sanctions as well as "possible Department of War engagement on counterterrorism and other efforts to protect religious communities."

In October, President Trump addressed the slaughter of Christians, redesignating Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC). He declared that the United States "cannot stand by while such atrocities are happening in Nigeria, and numerous other Countries. We stand ready, willing, and able to save our Great Christian population around the World!"

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