

Nigerian Christian Leaders Pray for Security and Economic Relief

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, is praying that relief finds a way to the people enduring hard times throughout the country.

Christians leaders are asking that security and economic assistance be given to those persevering through financial, spiritual and cultural difficulties.

According to Samson Itodo, executive director of YIAGA Africa, "He [President Tinubu] is inheriting a broken economy, he is inheriting a broken country, very polarized around religious and ethnic lines, and so there's a lot of expectation that being the Tinubu that he is, he is going to take on this responsibility, but I do believe Nigeria will pull out of this because of our resilient character."

As the new administration prepares to tackle the myriad issues before the country, religious leaders acknowledge the hard road ahead but remain optimistic that change can and will occur.

"Nigeria is facing a number of challenges that require strong and decisive leadership," says Rev. Daniel Okoh, president of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). "From security concerns to economic struggles, it is clear that there is much work to be done in order to ensure that Nigeria can reach its full potential."

It is Rev. Okoh's hope that President Tinubu will "prioritize these issues and work tirelessly to find lasting solutions that will improve the livelihoods of the people of Nigeria."

With Nigeria's rapidly growing population of around 220 million, predicted to double by 2050, and a median age of just over 18 years, youth unemployment and lack of opportunity are at the forefront of many voters' minds.

In the last election, however, Tinubu won with only 37% of the vote, as many locations were plagued with technical issues.

This has not stopped CAN and Rev. Okoh from putting forth the branch of peace and civility to Nigeria's new president in the hopes that positive change can be made for the country.

"This is a momentous occasion for Nigeria, and we wish President Tinubu well as he takes on the responsibilities of leading our great nation," Rev. Okoh says, and wishes the new president "all the best as he begins the onerous task of leading Nigeria at this time of our national history."

Many Christians across the country are praying for change, as Nigeria is currently listed at sixth on Open Doors World Watch List which monitors the persecution of Christians around the world.

Nigerian Christians are at high risk for violence, especially in Plateau State from Fulani herdsman, and have seen upward of 300 Christians killed since mid-May.

The Rev. Stephen Baba Panya, president of the ECWA, said that many Christians were still missing as a result of the attacks on Christians in Mangu County: "'This is an unfortunate and mindless situation where innocent Christians are being killed,' Pastor Panya said in a press statement. 'We, the church leaders and spiritual fathers, are calling on the government and all security agencies to immediately stop this ongoing massacre and its spread to more communities.'"

According to Morning Star News, "Since mid-May, Fulani terrorists have killed 300 Christians, displaced 30,000 residents, destroyed 28 church buildings and 2,000 houses and

looted 150 trailer loads of grain in the Mangu Local Government Area.

“Militants from the Fulani, Boko Haram, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and others conduct raids on Christian communities, killing, maiming, raping and kidnapping for ransom or sexual slavery,” the WWL report says. “This year has also seen this violence spill over into the Christian-majority south of the nation... Nigeria’s government continues to deny this is religious persecution, so violations of Christians’ rights are carried out with impunity.”

As the country enters into a new chapter with new leadership, Christians around the world are gathering with their Nigerian brothers and sisters in the hopes that the religious persecution endured by many will be addressed by the new government leadership. {eo}

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