

briefing

Nigeria

December 2009 Visit Report

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CSW Visit Report: December 2009

1. Yauri, Kebbi State

Prior to the creation of Zamfara and Kebbi States, Yauri was part of Sokoto State. Although the area has been a trouble spot for sometime, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in Yauri had so far managed to forestall any outbreak of major violence by undertaking proactive advocacy in response to every violation.

By and large, restrictions on religious freedom in Kebbi stem from the actions of the Emir of Yauri. Usually, problematic traditional rulers in northern Nigeria lack adequate exposure to the world outside of their domain, and are ignorant of the human rights and religious liberty provisions within the Nigerian constitution, and of Nigeria's undertakings under international law. Worryingly, the Emir of Yauri, who gained a BSc and MSc from Kansas State University and a PhD from Edinburgh, and should therefore be cognisant of these obligations. CSW was informed that Yauri was the only emirate in Kebbi State experiencing such extreme challenges with regard to religious freedom, so the problem may indeed originate with the Emir. Nevertheless, and despite the repression and formidable opposition, church leaders and members of the Yauri Chapter of CAN are meticulously documenting abuses and taking robust action in each case, including through legal means whenever finances allow.

The majority of Yauri's Christians are members of tribes indigenous to the area, and have converted from paganism. However, despite their indigenous status, they are regularly prevented from constructing new churches, and endure a cycle of construction and demolition. CAN Yauri challenges each demolition by gathering photographic evidence and sending detailed letters and petitions to the Kebbi State authorities.

1.1. Tashan Rogo

A Deeper Life church in Tashan Rogo with a membership of around 30 had been in the area for many years. After heavy rain severely damaged their original building, the church began to erect a new one. Local Muslims objected, and made them halt construction just as the front door was about to be fitted.

On 18 May 2009, Christian leaders, the Emirate Council and security agents discussed the matter at the meeting convened at the Emir's palace. The Emir instructed the church to halt construction pending an investigation into whether or not the church had a legitimate presence in the area, and was legally entitled to make use of the land in question. However, on 2 June, in a contradiction of all that had been agreed upon during the meeting, the church was demolished without explanation. The pastor wrote to the Emir, but received no response. The villagers are currently worshipping in a member's house.

1.2. Barkin Turu

In November 2009, 43 people in the village of Barkin Turu converted to Christianity. During the week leading up to the CSW visit, the villagers had requested an Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) presence in the area. However, on the following Sunday, a new village head ordered the villagers to inform the ECWA pastor not to return to the village. When the pastor visited him to discuss the issue, he was merely informed that he should not bring Christianity to the area. The 43 converts are now facing severe pressure.

1.3. Yauri Local Government Area (LGA)

Although a parish of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) was established in Yauri in 2007, the church had been renting a hall for two years. In early 2009, the RCCG

finally obtained land for a building in an area surrounded by other churches that was specifically designated for this purpose. Around four months after receiving the necessary papers from Yauri Local Government (LG) and from the Kebbi Environmental Development Authority, the church decided to construct a building, and went to the District Head to acquire a letter of permission. The District Head refused to supply one, stating that the Emir had informed him not to issue any such letter to churches. The church sent several letters to him, but receives no response. Letters to the Emir did not elicit a response either. Eventually the church pastors decided to commence construction in November 2009. So far there have been no interruptions, but the church worries that it will need the District Head's letter in future in order to acquire a Certificate of Occupancy (C of O).

1.4. Abduction and Discrimination

Another pastor apprised CSW of the fact that the wives of Indigenous Christians are regularly abducted. When the matter is reported to the local police, the Christians are generally ridiculed and asked if they are part of the Emirate Council. Some pastors who have attempted to be of assistance have allegedly been brought before Shari'a courts and detained.

The pastor also spoke of the discrimination suffered by these villagers, who regularly face attempted extortion by the police. CAN Yauri has confronted the police each time this happens; however, the police merely deny that extortion occurs. In the village of Arabu Lafiya, Christians were detained merely for worshipping, and payments had to be made to secure their release.

Finally, the pastor informed the CSW team of a seven-man panel that has been set up to oversee the construction of churches in the area, and added that the panel employs obstruction and delaying tactics. Consequently, CAN Yauri has now advised churches that have fulfilled all building requirements to simply go ahead with construction.

1.5. Pastor Subjected to Shari'a Punishments, Kimo, Yauri

Hannatu Musa had been a Christian for six years when her parents were converted to Islam by Muslim missionaries in 2008, and were instructed to convert their children also. When each of the children refused to convert, her father, Musa Ashika, was ordered to arrange marriages with Muslim men for his daughters. Once she realised that the Village Head and her parents were arranging a marriage for her without her consent, Hannatu informed her pastor, Manu Makeri, that she could not cope, and would either kill herself or run away. Pastor Makeri advised her to speak to her parents about her feelings, and tried to speak to them himself. However, when the parents continued to ignore her wishes, Hannatu fled the area on 17 March 2009. The family blamed the pastor, and after having tracked down Hannatu with Pastor Makeri's assistance, they brought him before the Shari'a Court in Birnin Yauri on 1 April despite the fact Muslims cannot be brought before such courts unless they have agreed to this in advance in writing. Nevertheless, the pastor was sentenced to 12 lashes – which were administered – and was obliged to choose between a jail sentence, or payment of a N10,000 fine to the court and of N30,000 in compensation to the family. His family had no option but to raise the money.

Hannatu was forcibly converted and married off to Muslim man against her will. She fled again soon thereafter. Once again the pastor was brought before a Shari'a court, this time the Upper Shari'a Court of Yauri where he was charged with abduction by Alkali Shehu. CAN Yauri challenged the jurisdiction of Shari'a court judge with reference to Section 277 (2) (b) of the Federal Constitution, which limits the jurisdiction of such courts in family or personal matters to cases where all parties to a dispute are Muslim. However, the judge ignored this, and jailed the pastor for two days, refusing bail. In response, CAN Yauri issued a detailed petition on the case, which it publicised with the assistance of CSW Nigeria. The

judge was eventually forced to agree to the pastor's release, and referred the matter to the police, who found there was no case to answer. However, the parents then appealed to the Emir, claiming that their daughter had been kidnapped by the pastor. CAN challenged this story, and asked for four days grace in order to ascertain Hannatu's whereabouts. However, the family mounted a further complaint at a magistrate's court, and the pastor was detained for four days.

CAN Gombe retained a lawyer to prosecute the case in the magistrate's court. At one stage, after the magistrate had said the girl's parents should decide on marriage, the lawyer asked: "Are we in a court of Islam or a court of the Federation?". The magistrate, Shehu Kalgo, responded by saying that his hands were "tied because calls had come from above" - in other words, from the Emirate. The pastor was eventually granted bail, Hannatu is still missing, and the case remains with the magistrate's court.

1.6. Church Vandalised by Convert's Parents

The relatives of a young male convert from Islam broke into the church he attended, ransacking it and destroying furniture. The church reported the matter to the police, who took no action. Instead they attempted to justify the attack, by informing the church officials that the parents had a right to enter the church since their son was underage – which was untrue. The parents promised not to cause any further trouble, and were therefore released. Soon afterwards, however, the parents launched a secondary attack, removing doors and windows from the church building. This attack was caught on film. CAN Yauri intended to use the video footage to launch a court case against the family, but at the time of our visit, Nigerian courts were on strike.

1.7. Plight of Kambari Christians

CSW was informed that the abduction of women and girls is a particular problem amongst the Kambari tribe. They are taken away and forcibly married, in the case of girls, without parental consent. Parents merely receive a telephone call telling them that their daughter had "chosen a husband for herself". A recent case had occurred three months prior to the CSW visit. The girl's parents and pastor had complained to the District Head, who refused to listen, and even went on to claim he was the girl's father, and his wife was her mother. The girl's real parents have not seen her since she disappeared. When the family tried to report the case to the police, they were told to hand over N10,000 before any investigation could be launched. Several Kambari men are now abandoning their faith for fear of losing their wives and daughters.

This is not the first time CSW has heard of the harassment of Kambari Christians, which usually occurs at the instigation of the local District and Ward Heads. On 19 March 2007, and in an attempt to convert Christian villagers, members of the Yauri branch of Kebbi State's Hisba Committee arrived in the village of Arabu-Lafiya in an official vehicle bearing a vast array of gifts. The Hisba ordered two visiting pastors to leave the area before proceeding with attempted re-conversions.

In June 2007 the harassment escalated. The villagers were charged and sentenced for the non-existent crimes of converting to Christianity without the permission of the Emir of Yauri, of hosting an evangelist from ECWA, and of receiving discipleship training from said evangelist without prior authorisation. As punishment for these alleged infractions the villagers were instructed to end all Christian activities in the village until receiving authorisation to continue with them, and to pay a fine of N15,000 (around £60.00, or USD120.00) by 29 June. In addition the ECWA evangelist was ordered to leave the area and only return once he had obtained permission from the Emirate to do so. Then on 12 July, CAN Yauri received news of the arrests of two villagers who were being pressurised to deny their faith. One gave in under pressure, while another, named Vumma Dadi, refused.

Mr Dadi was subsequently detained with chains around his hands and legs, and was also flogged nine times at the orders of the District Head. He was released after CAN Yauri reported the incident to the State Security Service office in Shanga.

1.8. Forced Closure of the Lord's Chosen and Christ the Answer Ministries

The Lord's Chosen Church was forcibly closed for over a month. However CAN Yauri mounted a petition, as a result of which the Area Commander met with church leaders and with the Emir. The Emir eventually agreed that the church could re-open, but falsely claimed that the problem had originated from the fact that Christians did not seek permission before erecting edifices. When it was eventually allowed to reopen, the church's leaders were warned not to undertake any construction activities without the Emirate's permission.

In June/July 2009, the pastor of Christ the Answer Ministries church, Emmanuel David, received a message that the District Head wished to see him. When he arrived at the District Head's house, he was asked who had given him the right to build a church, and was informed that the church would be closed down within a week: "We have closed the Lord's Chosen Church, and we will close you". A week later, an entourage arrived at the church to close it down. However, the church took its documents to the District Police Officer (DPO), who forwarded them to the Commissioner of Police, and both churches were reopened. The District Head then demanded the church's C of O; fortunately the church has one. He was obliged to back down, the church was duly reopened, but disgruntled Muslims regularly throw fish and stones at the building. Three days prior to the CSW visit, a Muslim man who had jumped over the church fence was caught carrying used condoms and other unsavoury items with which he intended to desecrate the premises. He was in jail at the time of the visit.

2. Maiduguri, Borno State

During meetings with Christian leaders in Borno it became evident that the death toll during the 2009 Boko Haram violence was far higher than figures officially issued. Local estimates were that over 2000 people may have died. One source informed us that at the hospital alone corpses were piled up four feet high, and added that the government had been obliged to create three mass graves.

In Maiduguri CSW met with ten women widowed during the Boko Haram violence. Using a grant from CSW UK's chief executive, grinding mills were purchased for the ten most destitute widows identified by local churches to assist them with income generation. Once he realised who they were for, the man who constructed them sold them to CSW at cost, taking no profit for himself.

While all of the ladies were clearly grieving deeply, one appeared particularly traumatised. Her husband had left the safety of their home to assist others and had been murdered. Some people had cruelly mocked him for this, compounding her pain. While we were there CSW Nigeria was able to link her with a local pastor who could assist with bereavement counselling.

2.1. Meeting with Victoria Orji

Victoria Orji is the widow of Pastor George Orji, who was held as a human shield in the Boko Haram camp in Maiduguri's Railway suburb. He boldly refused forcible conversion, and even called on Mohammed Yusuf to repent, before being beheaded as he prayed and sang praises. Prior to this, Pastor George had turned to a fellow captive and said: "If you survive, tell my brothers I died well and am living with Christ. And if we all die, we know we die for the Lord". His story has now gone around the world.

When CSW met her, Mrs Orji had just given birth to a baby girl, the couple's third daughter. The CSW team informed her that her husband's testimony was an inspiration to all who heard it. She was greatly encouraged.

Regarding the manner in which her husband had challenged the actions of the Boko Haram leader in the face of death, she said: *"When I heard about how he had acted I was not surprised, because the man just hated sin, and would always challenge it no matter what. From the way he lived in the nine years I knew him, you knew he was not long for this world"*.

She informed us that his preaching was extraordinary and original. Victoria said that as she sat listening to him, in her heart she would tell God that such preaching ought to have a wider audience, and would pray that somehow take Pastor George's voice would reach the world. When he died, she asked ruefully: *"God is this the way the prayer has been answered? But who can question God"*.

Mrs Orji said she felt God was close to her at this time. She added that the knowledge that her husband's death was a testimony was keeping her going, and that God was even using her two-year-old and four-year-old daughters to speak encouraging words to her. At that point she broke down, and said that a few days prior to meeting the CSW team she had visited the mass grave on the former Boko Haram site where her husband is thought to be buried— the headquarters itself has been razed to the ground. *"I stood there and said to him: 'you have done well'"*.

With regard to the gift of a grinder, she said *"You do not realise what you have done. This gift will go further than you can imagine"*.

2.2. Interview with Former Boko Haram Hostages Christina and Mary¹

The experiences of 23-year-old Christina, and particularly of 13-year-old Mary, were featured in brief in a CSW press release. Their fuller accounts shed light on an aspect of the violence that was largely ignored by the international media. Twenty six churches were either partially or completely destroyed by the militants, as were twenty Christian residences and 20 offices in church premises. In addition, three pastors were amongst the Christians targeted and murdered by the sect.

After Sunday evening services, both girls spent the night at their church's vicarage – Mary was too ill to go home, and Christina had worked until late, and so decided it was safer to stay over. At around 1am they were woken by the assistant pastor, Sylvester Obong, and his brother, who informed them there was gunfire all around and asked them to start praying. As the group moved towards the church along with watchman Elijah Gambo, they saw Boko Haram militants breaking through the gate. Mary vividly described how the militants seized the gateman and *"cut off his head like they were cutting meat"*. One of them said *"set his body on fire together with the church"*. They grabbed Christina, demanding to know where the church kept its guns. After ransacking buildings and finding none, they entered the church building, where the others had run for refuge. They killed the pastor's brother with machetes after discovering his hiding place. Then the pastor came out of hiding, holding Mary's hand. The attackers demanded that he released her; however, he kept hold of her and prayed: *"Father, I know I am coming to you, but what about these children?"* At that point one of his attackers stabbed him in the head, and as he attempted to remove the knife, they cut off the hand with which he had been holding Mary. He ran from the room chased by militants, and that was the last time he was ever seen.

¹ Names changed to protect anonymity

The girls were taken separately to the Boko Haram camp by groups of militants, where they were to witness further atrocities. Some of the attackers spoke Hausa, but were clearly not from Maiduguri as they were asking fellow militants where churches were located so that they could destroy them as ordered. More seriously, and in an indication of foreign involvement in the violence, the girls informed CSW that several of the militants who could not speak Hausa spoke in Arabic. Later, a captured Boko Haram member would appear to corroborate accounts of foreign involvement in the violence when he confessed to receiving training overseas.

Once in the camp, male and female hostages were separated and held in different locations. Christian men were given the options of conversion or death, while women and children were obliged to choose between conversion and perpetual slavery. In reality, most Christian men were killed outright, whether or not they chose to convert. Survivors state that the Boko Haram leader personally oversaw the forcible conversions, and would decide at random who lived or died.

Christina and Mary were initially accused of insulting Islam and saying Christianity is best. They denied this, and on several occasions they were asked to convert to Islam. To buy time, Christina very cleverly said that she and Mary could not convert to what they did not understand, and one of the militants took it upon himself to teach them. At one point, they were saved from having to take part in a conversion ceremony by heavy rainfall. In the meantime, as punishment for their insistence on remaining Christians, they were taken to an area in the camp where they saw around 30 corpses, were given a small packet of soap powder and were told to wash bloodied clothes until they were clean without finishing the powder. As they were washing the clothes more and more women were being brought into the compound. *“One was crying that her husband had been killed in front of her face. “We tried to comfort her”, said Mary.*

The girls saw Boko Haram leader Mohammed Yusuf on several occasions, and their testimonies give some insight into his thinking. Mary first encountered him when the group that had captured her finally arrived at Boko Haram’s camp in the Railway suburb, after a hazardous journey that included crawling on the ground in order to avoid Operation Flush, the joint military and police response team set up to tackle the violence. As the militants approached the camp, they broke into praises as Mohammed Yusuf approached them. He angrily demanded to know why the group had not killed Mary or let her go, and told them to lock her in a room, where she was later joined by Christina.

Christina had had an equally harrowing journey to the camp, having been forced to lie on the ground, run and climb fences in order to evade Operation Flush. When they arrived at the camp the group led her through a large field to an area with buildings and trees. Some Boko Haram members were in the trees acting as look-outs, some were standing on the ground beside them, and others were lying on the ground. As they approached the area, the group began shouting *“Allah u Akbar”,* and on catching sight of Christina, of the men said *“What use is she? We may as well pour petrol over all of them and burn them!”* However, another insisted: *“First let us find out whether they will stay with us and marry us. If they refuse, we will send them as slaves to Arab countries”.* As they related their nocturnal activities, Mohammed Yusuf congratulated his followers: *“You have done well. However, we need to kill more souls. Kill all the men. If women refuse to convert, either kill them or take them as servants or slaves.”* He also told his followers to pretend to be motorcycle taxi or bus drivers, and to take the uniforms of bus drivers in order to work more effectively. On the next day, the girls encountered him again as he gave orders for his men to burn police stations, steal all of the weaponry they could find, and make every effort to take uniforms from dead policemen in order *“to fool others”.* During the crisis, the sect targeted police stations and barracks, killing policemen and their families in a particularly brutal fashion. Survivors of the Maiduguri camp

also affirm that captured policemen or other security personnel were butchered “*as if they were not human beings*”.

As the kidnapping of non-Muslims increased, the girls relate that Mohammed Yusuf ordered his followers to break into every shop and bring supplies of food and medicine “*in order to supply everyone that is coming in.*” He again ordered his followers to “*keep the women and children, and kill the husbands*”. The girls say that by the second day of their captivity there were over sixty female hostages on the compound, and many more children. They were unable to account for the number of male hostages as they were kept separately.

The girls were in the Boko Haram camp for three days. On the penultimate day, the militants returned the women’s confiscated cell phones, but had attempted to damage them by immersing them in water. One of the women had hidden an MTN SIM card in her brassiere. Christina decided to try it out in every handset, and eventually found one in which it worked. She managed to get through to Mary’s parents, who later put her in contact with the police, who in turn learned for the first time that hostages were being held in the compound. The police informed Christina that they had received an executive order to wipe out the militants. They asked her to describe the layout of the compound, which she did in detail, informing them of where male and female hostages were being held and describing the location of the mosque. The police said they could not guarantee the safety of the hostages, and advised that they run as soon as the next round of shooting began, as this would herald the beginning of the end game.

Terror broke out amongst the hostages as Operation Flush began its final assault on the compound; “*Everyone was praying and calling on the blood of Jesus*”. Not long after the assault was underway, Mohammed Yusuf telephoned the militants defending the compound and informed them that he had escaped and that they should do likewise.

The girls eventually managed to escape, but almost fell prey to Boko Haram sympathisers outside the camp, who pretended they wanted to help them, but who instead attempted to lead them to a graveyard where they intended to do them harm. They were eventually saved by an elderly Muslim man.

Mary now wants to become a lawyer. When asked how they felt about living in Maiduguri and if they had nightmares about their time in the camp, both said they no longer feel safe in the city. “*I only dream of my pastor*”, said Mary.

2.3. Failure to Compensate Victims of 2006 “Cartoon Riots”

A worrying piece of information emerged concerning the Governor of Borno. During the 2006 Cartoon Riots, when 57 churches were destroyed and over 65 Christians killed, the governor’s role had been called into question. Many wondered how the violence was allowed to rage for several hours without intervention, when troops are generally deployed as a matter of course during any demonstrations. There were also allegations that towards the end of the violence, the governor appeared in the streets and was feted by the assailants, and that he later deliberately excluded Christian members of the Commission of Enquiry into the violence from deliberations, yet expected them to sign up to a final document they had neither read nor contributed to. When the local CAN secretariat objected to this, he allegedly swore never to compensate churches or Christians for their losses, and shunned CAN Borno until the posts of secretary and chair had new incumbents. If true, this action on the part of the governor is unlawful and discriminatory, as to date, no church or Christian has been compensated for their losses, although a Muslim man, whose property was destroyed because it housed a Christian business, was compensated almost immediately.

2.4. Discrimination and Restrictions on Religious Freedom

In a memorandum sent to the Governor of Borno State in the aftermath of the Boko Haram violence, CAN Borno outlined other discriminatory policies that have been practiced by successive state governments.

Despite Nigeria's undertakings under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other statutes, Christian Religious Knowledge (CRK) is not taught in Borno's schools. The government also routinely refuses the allocation of land for the building of churches, with rights of occupancy usually being revoked, as occurred in the case of Living Zion Ministries Church in Bolori. In addition, while the government is reported to have used official funds to construct mosques in new housing estates, no churches have been constructed on these estates.

In the document, CAN Borno also pointed out that while the Borno State government has created a Ministry for Religious Affairs, all senior staffing positions are manned by Muslims, apart from the role of Deputy Director.

Finally, CAN Borno highlighted discrimination in employment, whereby qualified applicants are disregarded on account of their faith. The organisation drew particular attention to events that occurred during the appointment of the chief judge of Borno State, where qualified Christian candidates with experience and seniority were ignored in favour of a junior and less qualified Muslim candidate.

3. Kano State

In Kano City the team met Pastor Dahiru Lamu, Secretary of CAN in Garku, who informed us of the unlawful detention of three Christians belonging to a church in the Garku area of Kano State.

3.1. Unlawful Detention of Staff of Fishers Evangelical Bible Church, Garku

Eight years ago Fishers Evangelical Church was founded in Garku by a lady overseer named Hannatu. She had handed the church over to the current leadership team, who had began to construct a building, but were prevented from doing so on three occasions by the local traditional ruler. On the third occasion the church took the matter to court, assisted by CAN Garku. The District Head asked the church if the matter could be settled through out of court negotiations. This proved to be a ruse, for once the case was withdrawn from the court, negotiations ceased immediately.

After waiting for over a year, the church decided to recommence construction. On 13 December 2009, the Village Head ordered the church to cease construction and proceeded to inform the District Head about the matter. On 15 December the District Head called the church and CAN Garku to a meeting, where he inexplicably stated that because he had been prevented from praying as he was driving through an area in the eastern Nigerian city of Onitsha, local Christians should suffer for this. He instructed his secretary to write to the DPO, asking him to arrest three church members. Shortly afterwards two church elders and the church secretary were arrested, and the church was asked to pay money to secure their release, while CAN Yauri was obliged to hand over money for their meals. The men were not informed of the charges against them, neither were they informed of when they would be released, in the event that bail money was not forthcoming. Instead, the church was informed that the men would only be released once the church had been pulled down.

After a detailed briefing from the head of CAN Garku, the CSW team decided to visit CAN HQ in Kano in order to inform them of events and ensure that whatever action we took complimented the work already done on the ground. We began with a visit ECWA HQ in

Kano City, which led to a meeting with the inspirational CAN Kano Secretary, Apostle Bello. He informed us that the General Overseer (GO) of Fishers Evangelical Bible Church was in town, and that since the problem was an ongoing one, the church had already retained a lawyer, who was familiar with the case. We met the GO, who had not heard of the arrests, and who took us to the law firm. Armed with a legal expert, we travelled to Garku – about an hour and a half away from Kano City. News of our imminent arrival had already reached the District Head's palace and when we were 15 minutes away from the area, we were informed that the men had been released. The team visited the station anyway in order to forestall such developments in future. When we arrived we found the DPO had left the office. The remaining police officers informed us that the men had been detained for "land trespass", that they had been released on bail and asked to return to the police station on the following Monday, and that in the meantime all construction work should be halted. The lawyer brilliantly apprised them of their error in arresting the men simply on the orders of a District Head, adding that federal police should not allow themselves to be misused in this manner, particularly since the case concerned an inheritance issue and was therefore a civil matter, not a criminal one. The lawyer also undertook to return to the village on the following Monday to represent the three men.

3.2. Igbo Road, Kano City

The CSW team was informed of the dilemma faced by businesses on this large and busy road in Kano City's Christian neighbourhood during Friday prayers. The road is completely blocked, and "*no-one must move or speak*". The team was informed that on one occasion, angry Muslims nearly set fire to a building where children were playing and making noise on the second floor. Since then, businesses have decided to close during Friday prayers, just to be on the safe side.

3.3. Meeting with Danjuma Ali, ECWA Treasurer, Kano

The ECWA treasurer is a Muslim convert who had faced opposition from his father, who was an Islamic judge, for converting to Christianity and had had to run away to Gombe State. In 2008 he was reconciled with his father, who apologised in tears for his past actions.

Mr Ali began by reiterating the fact that in areas of Kano where indigenous Christians are in the majority, such as Rogo, Tudun Wada and Sumaila LGAs, there is severe and deliberate marginalisation. Education in particular is paralysed; there are no schools or even boreholes. In fact the state government effectively abandons Christian areas and does not even open primary schools there. In addition, when Christian children do receive placements in schools, false accusations of desecrating or insulting the Qur'an, Islam or the prophet Mohammed are regularly levelled against them. Violence ensues and the students are forced out of school, despite the fact that the accusations remain unproven. Mr Ali added that many children cannot access higher education once they are found to come from Christian homes

In response, CAN Kano has initiated a school in Sabon Gari to help students who cannot afford fees or have faced other difficulties in obtaining education. The school currently caters for 300 boys and 70 girls from Kano's majority-Christian LGAs. He had personally initiated 11 primary and secondary schools, but many more were needed.

With regard to the construction of churches, Mr Ali added that District Heads throughout Kano have been instructed not to permit the erection of a church in any LGA.

3.4. The Kano Hisba

The Hisba (Shari'a enforcement) force continues to harass converts from Islam. One of the cases involved a young business man who converted to Christianity. At one point his uncle threatened him with death unless he converted back to Islam; however, the uncle himself died on the evening he made the threat. The man lost everything and had to flee to Abuja to

guarantee his own safety, as he was being harassed at every turn. During one incident, the Kano Hisba locked him up for a week and told him to “*come back [to Islam] or we will know what to do with you*”. His in-laws also took away his wife and children, although the children were eventually returned to him.

In another case, a 40 year old man was forced to flee to Borno to escape pressure from the Hisba. In yet another, an 18 year old convert was forced into hiding by harassment, and his family took to the airwaves to try and track him down, announcing repeatedly that their son was “lost”.

3.5. Meeting in Gani, Sumaila LGA with Pastors from Marginalised Areas of Kano

There are over 117 churches in Samaila LGA, and each of these congregations is made up of Christians from tribes that are indigenous to Kano State. The CSW team met over 30 pastors, 20 elders and many lay members from churches in the most marginalised areas of Kano. Roads to Christian villages are never repaired, clinics are never built near them, neither are Christian villages supplied with boreholes, so potable water is difficult to come by. We were told that the venue would have been filled to capacity “*if not for the distance and the short notice of the meeting*”. Those present related a litany of abuse and discrimination.

3.5.1. Violence and Discrimination

We were informed that at the smallest pretext, political crises are regularly – and deliberately – converted into religious ones. For example, in the violence that broke out during the 2007 local government chairmanship elections, one man was killed and Christian-owned homes and businesses were burnt to ashes. Losses amounted to over N15,000,000. Compensation was promised, but never received.

Those present also pointed out that while much is being made internationally about alleged discrimination against the Hausa Fulani in Plateau State, where there are Hausa-Fulani representatives in both the state and federal houses of assembly, in Kano there are no Christians – even those from indigenous tribes - at councillor or chairmanship level.

3.5.2. Restrictions on Church Construction

The construction of new church buildings is never permitted, regardless of the size of a congregation. Even if land is purchased by a church, it does not receive permission to erect a building. When churches seek permission to build, they are generally told to wait, and the waiting period is indefinite. The team was also informed that no churches are allowed in Wudil LGA, and that local Christians are obliged to travel to Garku in order to worship together.

On a more positive note, in an area called Ladi Makole, a Muslim who had returned from Enugu in the south where he had enjoyed religious freedom, objected so strongly to the manner in which local Christians were being treated, that he has decided to build a church for them and has dared anyone to try and touch it.

3.5.3. Violation of Rights of the Child

Particularly striking during this meeting was the almost palpable pain with which those present spoke of future prospects – or lack thereof – for their children.

In a violation of the federal constitution and of Nigeria’s undertakings under the Convention on the Rights of a Child, the teaching of Christian Religious Knowledge does not occur in Kano State. Moreover, in order to receive any education, many children have to change their names from Christian ones to Muslim ones. However, this tactic does not necessarily guarantee an education, as schools regularly conduct investigations and generally expel

children who feel compelled to tell the truth about their faith. One of the pastors present at the meeting informed CSW that his daughter had been investigated and the authorities had demanded to know her father's profession. After responding truthfully she was asked: "What is a pastor's daughter doing in school?" His daughter was allowed to complete her education, but was never given her results. In the end she had to be sent to Kaduna State to complete her studies.

Non-Muslim children who are permitted to finish school often find that their final examination results are withheld, and so cannot go on to further education. One pastor spoke painfully of how he was obliged to pay a bribe in order to ensure that his daughter could continue in school. In addition, Christian children are not given scholarships even when they qualify for them. The team was informed of one girl who studied at Maikwatsi Government Girls Secondary School in Fage LGA, and had successfully passed examinations she had taken in July 2009, thereby qualifying for free schooling. She was subsequently informed that she did not qualify because she was "not from Kano", despite the fact that her family is indigenous to the area.

The team also received a fuller account of the phenomenon whereby false charges of blasphemy and defamation are levelled against Christian students, who are subsequently attacked and expelled from school. One such incident took place at Sumaila Secondary School on Tuesday 29 January 2008. Papers were discovered that were deemed defamatory of Muslims or Islam, and a Christian student was blamed for this. Muslim students and townsfolk armed themselves and began to hunt down Christian students. A policeman died in the violence, the police station was set on fire, and a student was almost beheaded, but was rescued and rushed to hospital, where he later recovered. A similar incident occurred at another secondary school on 22 January 2009, and in November, children at Rimi Secondary School faced similar accusations after a paper containing defamatory words was put under a prayer mat in a mosque. Eight Christian children were expelled, briefly reinstated, then expelled again two days later. When representatives of the local chapter of CAN visited the school to enquire about the expulsions, the principal informed them that the children were expelled following a directive from the zone educational office. At the time of the CSW visit, the eight children were at home, unable to attend school.

Even when communities receive independent support to build a school, official registration of the school is difficult to obtain. In a community where farming is done manually because people cannot afford tractors, few can afford the cost of sending their children to other states where they can gain an education. "Our great question is: where are our rights, or why must we be deprived and robbed of our rights continuously, or how long will this continue?"

3.5.4. Discrimination and Repression

If non-Muslim children are able to complete their schooling, they then face obstacles gaining employment. A pastor from Samaila told of how his son, Daniel, had tried to join the army during a recruitment drive. He was informed "there cannot be a Daniel in Kano, so you cannot be recruited" and was sent away. CSW was informed that in Samaila, the non-recruitment of Christians into the army appears to be tacit policy. One young man also informed the team of the case of his elder brother, Iliya Ishaya, who had graduated and was looking for brief stint of employment before continuing with education. A Muslim man, who was unaware that he was a Christian, said he would help him get a job as a policeman at a cost of over N100,000, which included a bribe for the man himself. Just as he was about to get the job, one of the man's Muslim friends saw Ishaya in a pastor's house and enquired if he was a pastor's son. He never got the job.

Ladies in the meeting informed the CSW team that state government poverty alleviation drives were also executed in a biased manner. For example, free grinding mills are only distributed to Muslim women.

Finally, the team was informed that if a man converts from Christianity to Islam, his wife is generally compelled to follow him, as was currently the case with a lady called Lami, who was facing severe pressure to convert following her husband's adoption of the Islamic faith. The team also informed of child abductions or stealings, and of the forceful manner in which Muslim missionaries gain entry into homes to convert indigenous Christians. We also encountered a bus-load of them during the journey.

At the end of the meeting CSW team was told: "*Whatever you can do to help us get our rights, we would be grateful*".

4. Jigawa State

The team met with over 50 pastors, who briefed them on discrimination in Jigawa.

4.1. Churches and Church Construction:

Since the creation of Jigawa State, no church has been able to receive a C of O for the land. Only ECWA has one, which obtained it in 1947. From time to time the government of Jigawa might allow churches to be built, but will eventually inform the church that a mistake was made in the allocation of the land, and the church is pulled down.

One pastor informed the team that land can only be purchased by an individual and not by the church. His church had followed this route; however, when they presented their plans to build on land they were eventually informed: "*since this is a church, you cannot build a church on Muslim land*". Most churches tend to construct buildings regardless and struggle on, but are frequently moved to make way for "development".

During violence in 2006, 18 churches were razed to the ground. Churches were given land in a remote area, along with certificates of ownership of the land. However, at the same time locals were incited to protest against the presence of the churches. The situation became so heated that the Christian head of State Security Services was eventually obliged to halt further construction "*for security reasons*". As the situation dragged on, the churches eventually requested permission to renovate the churches that were destroyed in 2006. They requested permission in writing three times, and upon receiving no response, began to restore the churches.

In Kazaure LGA churches are experiencing what one pastor referred to as "*persecution by style*". When the LGA discovers that a building under construction is earmarked as a church, officials state that a "mistake" was made when granting the land, as the area where the church has been constructed was set aside for the construction of a road. The church is then bulldozed and the congregation rarely receives adequate compensation. Three churches, including an Apostolic church and one belonging to ECWA were bulldozed in this manner.

In addition, the Jigawa State Government is currently in breach of a High Court ruling. Three years ago ECWA church in Roni won a case against the government regarding land belonging to their church. However, the government continues to ignore the ruling. The church may eventually have to take the case to the Appeal Court in Kaduna; however, this may prove extremely costly, and the case may drag on for years.

4.2. Education

In state schools the government funds and employs teachers of Islamic Religious Knowledge (IRK) and Arabic, but has not agreed to fund CRK teachers. Consequently, CRK is only available in private Catholic or Anglican schools.

As in Kano, non-Muslim students struggle to access institutions of secondary and higher education, and in some schools they are prevented from meeting together. A youth worker also informed the team that he and other youth workers were regularly denied access to these institutions and cannot arrange meetings for Christian students. He specifically requested intervention with the authorities to ensure this situation is addressed.

4.3. Employment

Non-Muslims are rarely allowed to join paramilitary services or the public sector. Even if they are from tribes indigenous to Jigawa, they are generally excluded from employment as prison wardens, immigration officials or customs officers. There are even cases where indigene certificates have been taken away from indigenous non-Muslims.

A former teacher highlighted the fact that most Christians are employed on a contractual basis and do not receive a full letter of appointment or confirmation of employment. In an indication of how casually rights are violated, he informed the team that his job had been terminated, and in the section of the form detailing the basis for the termination, the reason was given as “no cause”.

4.4. Appeal to the Church in Southern Nigeria

The leaders concluded by requesting CSW’s assistance in informing the churches in southern Nigeria of the suffering of the church in the north, so that they could begin to earnestly pray and assist them. With this in mind, one leader uttered the following local proverb: “*Someone that is inside water does not know there is sun*”.

5. Plateau State

At the time of the visit Archbishop Kwashi of the Anglican Diocese of Jos was under serious pressure as he faced yet another death threat, and armed police were guarding the house.

Days prior to the CSW visit, his wife, Gloria Kwashi, began receiving calls from a man purporting to be a Christian and telling her to go into two and a half days of fasting to avert a serious catastrophe. She had previously been temporarily blinded by a particularly appalling assault by a gang who broke into the family home to assassinate the Archbishop, who was abroad at the time. The calls came from different states, each progressively closer to Plateau State. From the day of the first call, armed police began guarding the Archbishop’s court, controlling who went in and out, and in the early hours two truckloads of them undertook a tour of the area surrounding the house.

When violence erupted again in Jos in January 2010, many observers speculated that the threat to the Archbishop’s life was in reality an attempt to silence a significant Christian voice in advance of the outbreak. This seemed to be corroborated when a Nigerian newspaper leaked a security document detailing the properties that were deemed priority targets by assailants during any outbreak of violence. While the homes of every denominational head in Jos were listed, both the Archbishop’s home and his office were earmarked for destruction.

5.1. Visit to Widows of November 2008 Violence

The CSW team was able to provide 12 grinding mills and a sewing machine to 12 widows, and to a family of six children orphaned by the violence that wracked Jos in November 2008. We also donated six bags of 50kg rice to the guardians of the six orphans.

In response to the gifts, one of the ladies said: *"It is only God alone who can reward you people. May the Lord continue to bless you as you spend your time here"*. She added that the fact that they were not forgotten strengthened their faith and prayed God would reward all who had given towards these gifts.

5.2. Zambiri Outreach and Care Centre

During her travels around the diocese Mrs. Gloria Kwashi had begun to gather children abandoned due to AIDS and other stigma, and had started an impromptu orphanage in a house that had been given to them. This has developed into the Zambiri Outreach and Care Centre, which is run by her brother and sister-in-law, and caters for 10 girls, 18 boys – and counting. She did this out of pure compassion – there is no budget for the venture.

5.3. Sanga Gumau LGA, Bauchi State

Pastor Bewarang heads the Gospel Health and Development Services (GHaDS) of the Diocese of Jos. He informed CSW of a small community in Sanga Gumau LGA in Bauchi State where life is being made extremely difficult by the Muslim community.

The Christian community consists of subsistence farmers who require fertiliser in order to yield adequate crops from their land. Fertilizer is expensive; each bag costs N6,000, and Muslim traders loan the farmers one bag of fertiliser in return for two bags of any future harvest. Unfortunately, the farmers generally need five bags of fertiliser for an adequate yield, and since harvests are affected by the unpredictable rains, many farmers increasingly find themselves defaulting on payments. For every year that they default, the farmers' debt is doubled. When they are eventually unable to meet their arrears, the farmers are brought before a Shari'a court and are faced with the appalling option of either giving up their land, or giving up a child for conversion. GHaDS is seeking to assist these farmers by collecting animal droppings for them to use instead of the fertilizer supplied by Muslim traders. The CSW team has undertaken to visit the area in the near future.

6. Gauraka. Tafa LGA, Niger State

The team met a large number of pastors from the local CAN chapter and were given a detailed briefing of events there. The leaders informed the CSW team that Christians in Garku were regarded as second class citizens, and had been informed that they could not hold certain political offices because they were "Arna", the Hausa word for "Pagan". They added that harassment and persecution had increased markedly in the last two years.

6.1. Sale and Desecration of Cemetery

Two years ago the District Head, Alhaji Abubakar Musa, sold part of the Christian cemetery in Tafa. The new owners bulldozed over thirty graves, exposing and removing the bones of dead Christians, and occasioning much pain and anger. However, Christian leaders appealed for calm, and the people complied. The company concerned promised to undertake reconstruction, but had done nothing so far.

6.2. Destruction of New Covenant Church

On 4 April 2009, New Covenant Gospel church in Angwan Baro was totally vandalised and demolished by Hausa youths. The entire structure was ruined. According to the District Head, the destruction occurred because some Muslims had allegedly seen fetishists in the

cemetery and decided that they were Christians performing malign rituals. The churches complained to the DPO, who merely insulted them. No arrests have been made to date in connection with this incident. In the meantime, other local congregations collected money to assist the church with reconstruction; however, much more assistance is needed to fully restore the church.

6.3. Murder of Apostle Okhuoya

On 14 June 2009, Apostle Okhuoya of the Abundant Life Full Gospel Church, a powerful Christian voice in the area, was brutally murdered.

The Apostle had secured the release from detention of a Christian youth who had had an altercation with a Muslim youth. He escorted the youth to his home, then set off for the house of the community leader to negotiate an easing of tensions. On the way there he ran into the Hausa youth, who was approaching the Christian youth's home with a gang bent on vandalising it. He received a blow to the head with a machete, but was able to speak and asked to be carried to his church. As he entered, he held onto the door posts - his blood-stained hand print is still there - and was helped to the altar, where he prayed. After praying, Apostle Okhuoya was taken to hospital, where he died two days later.

The Apostle's killers were well known trouble makers; however, the police refused to take action for full week after the incident. Local police only took action after the local chapter of CAN protested to the Police Headquarters in Abuja. However, the delay enabled the ring leader to escape. A few members of the gang were eventually rounded up, and at the time of the CSW visit, they were detained in Suleja Prison pending a court date.

In the immediate aftermath of the murder, Gauraka is said to have resembled a ghost town – members of both religious communities were in panic, and people fled the area in large numbers fearing further trouble. The strong action taken by the churches to ensure justice was done in this case were viewed as a threat by the local authorities. Consequently, several leaders now feel obliged to take greater precautions with regard to their personal safety, and the Christian community in the area felt under siege and abandoned. However, a timely visit in the immediate aftermath of the Apostle's death by CSW Nigeria greatly encouraged them: "*Someone somewhere had remembered us*".

Christians in the area believe the killing of Apostle Okhuoya was a premeditated act aimed at silencing the church, as he had been an eloquent and articulate voice for the community. In addition, the Apostle's church building is situated in the heart of Gauraka, and many locals Muslims had complained about this to the local Emir, demanding that it be removed.

The church is currently being run by the Apostle's wife Edith, his younger brother and another assistant pastor.

6.4. Restrictions on Churches

As in Kano and Jigawa, congregations are regularly denied land for churches. The only church in the area that possesses a C of O is the Catholic church, which received this during the Military Era. The team was informed that the State Government in Kure was "very tough" on the churches. At one point churches were ordered not to use PA systems during all night prayer vigils, as this caused a disturbance. However, the churches pointed out the inconsistency in this decision in view of the amplified daily Muslim call to prayer at dawn, and the order was rescinded.

Leaders reported that a mosque had been built in the grounds of Tafa LGA's Secretariat. When Christians asked for similar treatment, a church was erected outside the walls of the

Secretariat. Consequently, while the mosque is securely situated within the LGA fence and can be easily protected in the event of violence, the church remains vulnerable to any attack.

Local authorities are vigilant in containing Christian activity. One pastor told of how he had requested permission to use a school for a church gathering. The day after the meeting he received an early morning call from the authorities demanding to know if the school had been turned into a church.

The team was also informed that in the Suleja area, previously part of Tafa LGA, no one sells land to churches. Even Christians who own land cannot sell it to the church as they have been informed that if they do, their right of ownership will be revoked. The team was also informed that many churches that were under construction in Suleja have been prevented from continuing, and were warned that there would be many arrests if construction recommences. In addition, two weeks prior to the CSW visit, a church in Suleja was broken into by thieves who removed the church's generator and stabiliser.

6.5. Requests for Assistance

The leaders concluded by requesting assistance in highlighting their plight in the press, "*help us to speak and help us fight the press war*". They lamented the fact that Christians continue to be easily intimidated, and those who access key offices appear too afraid for their positions to take effective action in the face of clear injustices. They also requested CSW Nigeria's mediation to ensure unity between the indigenous churches and those established by people from the south.

Finally, the pastors drew the team's attention to the case of Brother John Mantau, who had been employed as a missionary by the Christian Faith Bible Church, and who was severely injured during the course of duty when a vehicle in which he was travelling somersaulted and caught fire. He sustained major burns across his face and body, losing full use of his hands. The organisation for which he worked initially flew him to Germany for treatment, and then retired him due to his extensive injuries. He is now obliged to earn a living by farming – a slow and extremely difficult endeavour given the nature of his injuries, and is consequently under severe pressure financially.

7. Nigeria's Legal Obligations

Article 38 (1) of the Nigerian Constitution guarantees "freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change religion or belief, and freedom either alone or in the community with others, and in public and private), to manifest and propagate" one's beliefs "in worship, teaching, practice and observance". Article 38 (2) states that a child should not be obliged to receive religious instruction or take part in or attend any religious ceremony or observance relating to a religion other than their own without the approval of parents or guardians. Article 43 allows every Nigerian to acquire and own immovable property anywhere in the country, while Article 44 (1) (a) and (b) forbid the compulsory seizure of such properties "except in the manner and for the purposes prescribed by a law that, amongst other things, requires the prompt payment of compensation therefore, and gives to any person claiming such compensation a right of access for the determination of his interest in the property and the amount of compensation to a court of law or tribunal or body having jurisdiction in that part of Nigeria". Finally, Articles 42 (1) and 15 (2) prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion.

As regards international legal provisions, Nigeria has signed and ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Covenant on

Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)², the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination³, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women⁴ (CEDR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child⁵ (CRC, which has binding force), and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Convention against Torture (CAT)⁶. The country has ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR),⁷ and several International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions.

8. Recommendations

With reference to Yauri:

- An urgent investigation is needed into the role of the Emir of Yauri and the Emirate Council in obstructing the enjoyment of religious freedom by non-Muslims within his Emirate. For example, current restrictions in Yauri on the construction of churches amount to violations of provisions for freedom of religion contained within the Federal Constitution, and of particular concern is the Emir's possible complicity in the destruction of the Deeper Life Church in Tashan Rogo. It is also vital that the church is compensated in a timely manner, should the grounds for demolition prove to have been spurious;
- Nigeria is a signatory to the ACHPR, which states in Article 18 that signatory nations have a duty to protect the family, and to protect the rights of women and children "as stipulated in international declarations and conventions". The harassment of Kambari Christians, including the kidnap/abduction and forcible conversion of women and girls, is a severe violation of this Article and of the law of the land, and should be addressed as a matter of urgency. Action should also be taken to secure the immediate release of these women and girls, with detailed investigations into the actions of District and/or Ward Heads who have adopted extreme measures to restrict their freedom of thought, conscience and belief;
- The continuing harassment of Pastor Makeri, despite acknowledgement by the forces of law and order that he has no case to answer, is wholly unwarranted and must be brought to an immediate end. In addition, his subjection to a Shari'a punishment is a clear violation of the Federal Constitution that could amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment under the CAT, and could also violate Nigeria's obligations under the ICCPR.

With reference to Borno State:

- It is vital that all who lose livelihoods and properties in every violent incident are adequately compensated as soon as possible. There are no legal or moral grounds for withholding compensation from one faith community while granting it to another;
- It is also vital that the Government of Borno undertakes to bring practices within state schools into line with Nigeria's obligations under the CRC by ensuring that CRK is taught in state schools, and by funding CRK teachers;

² The country acceded to both Covenants in 1993

³ 1967

⁴ 1985

⁵ 1991

⁶ 2001

⁷ 1983

- The Government of Borno must also address continuing discrimination, particularly with regard to employment in the public sector.

With reference to Kano State:

- Violations of the CRC, such as the failure to teach CRK in public schools and the failure to provide educational institutions in non-Muslim areas, must be urgently addressed and ended. The severe marginalisation of such non-Muslim areas as Rogo, Samaila, Wudil and Tudun Wada must also be addressed, with efforts made to ensure that they too enjoy access to the same amenities provided to Muslim areas by the state government;
- The alleged prohibition of church construction in Wudil LGA constitutes a serious violation of Article 38:1 of the Nigerian Constitution, and must be amended;
- The issue of the existence of Hisba forces requires definitive resolution at Federal level. In addition the Hisba's harassment of converts constitutes a violation of the freedom to change one's religion or belief, as stipulated in Article 38:1.

With reference to Jigawa State:

- It is imperative that the State Government leads by example with regard to respecting the rule of law, and abides by the High Court ruling on ECWA Roni without further delay;
- To end further violations of the CRC, teaching of CRK should be commenced immediately, as should the funding of CRK teachers. In addition the tacit policy of denying Christian youth workers access to Christian students in educational establishments must also come to an end;
- Discrimination in public sector employment must also be ended as a matter of urgency.

With reference to Niger State

- Immediate action must be taken to ensure that the Christian cemetery is repaired in order to relieve renewed suffering of bereaved members of the community;
- New Covenant Church must be compensated as per the law, and those responsible for the unwarranted destruction of this church should be immediately brought to justice;
- With regard to the murderers of Apostle Okhuoya, it is vital that justice is both done and seen to be done. This is a vital prerequisite for the erosion of impunity in cases involving religious violence in northern and central Nigeria;
- In light of continuing tensions in Tafa LGA, it is important that the Niger State Government undertakes to guarantee the safety of Christian leaders in the area if local authorities are unwilling or unable to do so.

The Nigerian Constitution also states that one of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives is to respect international law and treaty obligations, many of which have binding force. It is therefore vital that during dialogues with the Nigerian Government, key members of the international community emphasise the importance of ending the flagrant manner in which several state governments continue to deny non-Muslim citizens of their rights by, amongst other things:

- Continually reiterating to northern and central state governments their constitutional obligation to end all discriminatory practices and policies and to disburse government funding and scholarships in an equitable manner, stressing that such action should be taken as a matter of urgency for the good of both the state and the nation;
- Withholding federal finance from state governments that persist in utilising these funds to support discriminatory and unconstitutional systems that promote the advancement of one community while neglecting others;
- Putting pressure on states to end the demolition and/or seizure churches, church-owned land and/or other religious establishments without compensation, and the arbitrarily denial or indefinitely delay in the granting of certificates of ownership, and permission to construct, reconstruct or improve religious premises;
- Pressurising the northern states to ensure that the rights of non-Muslims are respected, that non-Muslims are not subjected to Shari'a strictures or punishments, and that non-Muslim establishments, families or individuals receive sufficient and timely compensation for losses or damages sustained during violent episodes;
- Fully addressing the legality of the existence and activities of Hisba forces;
- Ensuring that state governments are held accountable for any failure to adequately protect the persons and properties of citizens by taking timely action to end outbreaks of violence, and, if necessary, placing federal forces in a state of readiness to end any violent outbreak;
- In the event of inadequate intervention by state governments, honouring Nigeria's binding obligations under the CRC to ensure the swift return of abducted children to their families , the punishment of perpetrators;
- Upholding the freedom of all Nigerians to change their religious affiliation, should they wish to do so.