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NIGERIA | U.S. Designates Boko Haram Terrorist Organization

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) welcomes yesterday's decision by the U.S. State Department to formally designate Nigerian Islamist group Boko Haram, and its off-shoot organization Ansaru, as a "foreign terrorist organization" (FTO).

The designation directs U.S. law enforcement and regulatory agencies to block business and financial transactions with Boko Haram and to investigate and prosecute suspects associated with the organizations.

A State Department statement said, "These designations are an important and appropriate step, but only one tool in what must be a comprehensive approach by the Nigerian government to counter these groups through a combination of law enforcement, political, and development efforts, as well as military engagement, to help root out violent extremism while also addressing the legitimate concerns of the people of northern Nigeria."

Previously, the U.S. government had designated three leaders of Boko Haram as terrorists but had stopped short of designating the group as a terrorist organization. Boko Haram is responsible for the deaths of thousands of Nigerians and has attacked military, federal, UN, Christian and Muslim targets as part of its armed insurgency to establish an Islamic state in the north of the country. During 2012, Boko Haram victims included the citizens of 15 nations. Earlier in 2013, Ansaru kidnapped and murdered seven international construction workers. CSW has campaigned for FTO designation as an important step towards disrupting the financial and strategic capabilities of the group, which has claimed links to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and to the Somali terrorist group al Shabaab.

Rev. Yunusa Nmadu, CEO of CSW Nigeria, said, "We welcome the long awaited designation of Boko Haram and its splinter group Ansaru as FTOs. We hope that this singular action will help to expose the individual and corporate sponsors of these terrorist groups, and assist in bringing about peace and safeguarding lives and properties."

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We too welcome the decision to designate Boko Haram and Ansaru as terrorist organizations, for which we have long campaigned. Boko Haram and Ansaru not only represent a threat to Nigeria's national security and unity, but also through their links with AQIM and al Shabaab they have long constituted a threat to both regional and international peace and security. We are hoping that the designations will provide an important impetus to international support for the Nigerian government in its efforts to bring an end to this deadly insurgency."