

SENATE RESOLUTION No. 123

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JUNE 5, 2023

Sponsored by:

Senator NILSA I. CRUZ-PEREZ

District 5 (Camden and Gloucester)

SYNOPSIS

Urges United States Secretary of State to designate Nigeria as “Country of Particular Concern” and appoint Special Envoy.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 **A SENATE RESOLUTION** urging the United States Secretary of State
2 to designate Nigeria as a “Country of Particular Concern” and to
3 appoint a Special Envoy for Nigeria and the Lake Chad region.
4

5 **WHEREAS**, In 2020, the Department of State designated Nigeria as a
6 “Country of Particular Concern” (“CPC”) pursuant to the
7 International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6401 et
8 seq.), finding that Nigeria was engaging in or tolerating systematic,
9 ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom, but omitted
10 Nigeria from the CPC list in 2021 and 2022; and

11 **WHEREAS**, For over a decade, terrorist organizations have perpetrated
12 mass murders, rapes, and kidnappings against Nigerians of various
13 religious backgrounds, and the United Nations High Commissioner
14 for Refugees reports this has resulted in over 3 million internally
15 displaced persons in northeastern Nigeria and 343,000 registered
16 refugee Nigerians in the Lake Chad region; and

17 **WHEREAS**, The United States Commission on International Religious
18 Freedom has noted that, in Nigeria’s Middle Belt area, nonstate
19 armed groups have attacked houses of worship, religious
20 ceremonies, and religious leaders, and the Nigerian government has
21 often failed to sufficiently respond to these acts of violence; and

22 **WHEREAS**, According to a 2020 Vatican report of its interview of a
23 Nigerian Catholic civil rights expert, Northern Nigeria has seen the
24 destruction of over 17,000 churches since 2009 in attacks by Boko
25 Haram militants, Fulani herdsmen and other assailants; and

26 **WHEREAS**, Open Doors has reported that 5,014 Christians were killed
27 in Nigeria in 2022, which was nearly 90 percent of the total number
28 of Christians killed worldwide that year; and

29 **WHEREAS**, On May 12, 2022, Deborah Yakubu, a Christian student,
30 was beaten to death by a mob on her school campus in Sokoto for
31 allegedly making statements against Islam, and the Sultan of
32 Sokoto and Sokoto’s Catholic Bishop Matthew Kukah faced death
33 threats for criticizing her murder; and

34 **WHEREAS**, The Aid to the Church in Need, a pastoral aid organization,
35 and the Catholic News Agency have separately reported that, since
36 early 2022, 20 Nigerian Catholic priests have been kidnapped, five
37 of whom were murdered, with many of these attacks occurring on
38 church grounds; and

39 **WHEREAS**, The Sahara Reporters and other news outlets reported in
40 2022, that eight Fulani militants abducted and tortured the head
41 Chaplain of the Methodist Church, Prelate Samuel Kanu-Uche, and
42 Catholic Bishop Dennis Mark of Owerri, who were released only
43 after paying a \$240,000 ransom; and

44 **WHEREAS**, According to Reuters as well as Nigerian media outlets,
45 imams were also abducted in Nigeria in 2022, with the Chief Imam
46 of Masama Mudi village, Zamfara, being abducted from his mosque
47 on December 29, 2022, and an imam being abducted in Zugu,
48 Zamfara state in a mosque attack on September 2, 2022; and

1 **WHEREAS**, In 2021, the Department of State reported five attacks on
2 mosques in Nigeria by unidentified gunmen, bandits, and Boko
3 Haram; and

4 **WHEREAS**, Given these recent, ongoing, egregious violations of
5 religious freedom, the United States Secretary of State should
6 designate Nigeria as a “Country of Particular Concern” and appoint
7 a Special Envoy for Nigeria and the Lake Chad region to aid in
8 providing liberty, justice, and equality for all of the religious groups
9 of Nigeria; now, therefore,

10

11 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate of the State of New Jersey:*

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13 1. The United States Secretary of State is respectfully urged to
14 designate Nigeria as a “Country of Particular Concern” and appoint
15 a Special Envoy for Nigeria and the Lake Chad region.

16

17 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
18 shall be transmitted by the Secretary of the Senate, to the President,
19 Vice President, and Secretary of State of the United States.

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21

22 **STATEMENT**

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24 This resolution urges the United States Secretary of State to
25 designate Nigeria as a “Country of Particular Concern” and to
26 appoint a Special Envoy for Nigeria and the Lake Chad region.

27 In 2020, the Department of State designated Nigeria a Country of
28 Particular Concern (“CPC”) finding that Nigeria was engaging in or
29 tolerating systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious
30 freedom, but omitted Nigeria from the CPC list in 2021 and 2022.

31 For over a decade, terrorist organizations have perpetrated mass
32 murders, rapes, and kidnappings against Nigerians of various
33 religious backgrounds, and the United Nations High Commissioner
34 for Refugees reports this has resulted in over 3 million internally
35 displaced persons in northeastern Nigeria, and 343,000 registered
36 refugee Nigerians in the Lake Chad region. The United States
37 Commission on International Religious Freedom has noted that the
38 Nigerian government has often failed to sufficiently respond to
39 these acts of violence.

40 Given these recent, ongoing, egregious violations of religious
41 freedom, the United States Secretary of State is respectfully urged
42 to designate Nigeria as a “Country of Particular Concern” and
43 appoint a Special Envoy for Nigeria and the Lake Chad region.