

## Discrimination, marginalization, and persecution of religious and ethnic minorities beyond Boko Haram

By 2002  
all 12 northern  
states had adopted  
sharia law

In northern and  
Central Nigeria  
**30% or 30  
million**  
are religious  
minorities<sup>1</sup>

### Ongoing Structural and Societal Discrimination<sup>7</sup>

Throughout northern and central Nigeria widespread policies and practices discriminate against religious and ethnic minorities prior to the emergence of Boko Haram and exist outside of areas controlled by Boko Haram. In the Muslim majority north, injustice often impacts all religious minorities including Christians, Shia Muslims, and adherents to African Traditional Religion. Reconciliation of groups, rehabilitation of victims, and the restoration of constitutional rights are essential for equitable economic and infrastructure development as well as for long term stability. There are different policies and practices in various states including:

#### Limited Education Opportunities

- Parents change the names of children to Muslim names to enable enrollment;
- Increased school fees for non-Muslim families;
- Abuse or mistreatment of non-Muslims while they are at school and on school premises;
- Requiring Islamic Religious Knowledge for all students while restricting Christian or other religious knowledge lessons.

#### Limited Vocation Opportunities and Negative Economic Impact

- Open adherents of Christianity denied or fired from government and public school positions;
- Markets dividing along religious lines with non-adherents facing higher prices, restricted shop rental space and refusal to hire non-co-religionists;
- Eviction when landlords learn of a family's non-Muslim identity.

- **72% of Northern Nigerians live in poverty**, compared to 27% in the South and 35% in the Niger Delta<sup>2</sup>
- **15,000 killed,<sup>3</sup> 910 schools ruined,<sup>4</sup>** and more than 3.2 million private homes destroyed by Boko Haram with Muslims the most numerically impacted faith community,<sup>5</sup>
- **158 of 417 Local Government Areas** in northern and central Nigeria have a population where more than 50% adhere to Christianity<sup>6</sup>
- **Consistent tension exists** around equitable constitutional rights for those designated "indigenous" rather than "settler" communities

See backside

## Restrictions on Religious Freedom

- Refusal to sell land for church construction, while permits are issued for the construction of mosques;
- Attacks on Shia Muslim communities and religious events by State security forces;
- Christian cemeteries vandalized with Christians then prohibited from cleaning them up;
- Significant repercussions when Fulani and Hausa convert from Islam;
- Forced marriages and conversion by Muslim men to Christian women.

## Denied Community Services and Rights

- Restricted community development such as fewer water boreholes and fewer health clinics in rural, predominantly Christian areas, and at times denied medical access for religious minorities in Muslim majority areas;
- Violent community and mob attacks on religious minorities after political elections or non-related international events such as the cartoon drawing of the Prophet Muhammad in Denmark;
- Denied, limited or fraudulent election participation;
- Government officials intentionally excluding representatives of religious minority communities from security briefings;
- Refusal to station police or other security forces in predominantly Christian areas even when local community members report information about impending attacks.



<sup>1</sup>"Crushed but Not Defeated: The Impact of Persistent Violence of the Church in Northern Nigeria," Open Doors and Christian Association of Nigeria (March 2016), 17-18.

<sup>2</sup>Mohammed Aly Sergie and Toni Johnson, "Boko Haram," Council on Foreign Relations (March 5, 2015), <http://www.cfr.org/nigeria/boko-haram/p25739> (accessed May 6, 2016).

<sup>3</sup>Nigeria Security Tracker: Mapping Violence in Nigeria," Council on Foreign Relations, <http://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483> (accessed May 6, 2016).

<sup>4</sup>"They Set the Classrooms on Fire: Attacks on Education in Northeast Nigeria," Human Rights Watch (April 2016), 1.

<sup>5</sup>"Letter from Africa: How to Rebuild Nigeria after Boko Haram," BBC (May 10, 2016), <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-36191512>

<sup>6</sup>"Crushed but Not Defeated," Open Doors and Christian Association of Nigeria (March 2016), 17-18.

<sup>7</sup>"Nigeria: Fractured and Forgotten, Discrimination and Violence Along Religious Fault Lines," 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative, [www.StandwithNigeria.org](http://www.StandwithNigeria.org) (June 2016), 20-37.