



Prayer for the Persecuted Church for January 26, 2024

Prayer for the Persecuted Church: Our Best Practices

Our focus in this hour is on prayer for the global church, not ourselves or our local issues. We can talk and even pray for those other things after prayer meeting is over at 1:00 p.m.

We strive to start our prayers by 12:10.

We are blessed to have a growing number of praying people join us. Let's all offer short prayers throughout our prayer time, allowing time for everyone to pray out loud if they wish. We are blessed by prayers when we can hear them, but silent prayers from our people are as valued as spoken ones.

Thank you for praying for the persecuted church. Encourage friends to pray, too!

Pray for imprisoned or kidnapped Christians

CHRISTIANS IN PRISON: This list is only a sample: CAMBODIA: Theary Seng; CHINA: Li Jie, Hang Xiaodong, Wang Qiang; John Cao, Yan Hwa, Goa Zhisheng, Wang Yi; Hao Zhiwei, Zhang Shaojie, Li Juncai, Lian Xu Liang; ERITREA: Meron Gebreselasie, Mussia Ezas, Dr. Kifly Gebremeskel, Kidane Weldou, Haile Nayzgi; INDIA: Pastor Sawan; KAZAKHSTAN: Pastor Maximov; NORTH KOREA: Zhang Wen Shi PAKISTAN: Zafar Bhatti; VIETNAM: Nguyen Nang Tinh, Nguyen Trung Ton

KIDNAPPED VICTIMS: Raymond Koh, Gilbert Biswas, Leah Sharibu, Sarah Atef, Joshua Hilmya & wife Ruth Sitepu, Hormoz Diril.

UPDATE on the special prayer request from our congregation:

Thank you for praying for the lady and her daughter from Iran. We received great news ... that their passports were renewed and they can move on to their next stage, which is to seek to travel to a more neutral country and from there to apply for UNHCR asylum status.

There is still a long way to go for them, but we are so thankful that the Lord graciously provided this first means of travel, as it was essential for moving forward and not being returned to their country of origin. Obviously, they are praising God and want to pass on thanks to everyone who prayed.

From International Christian Concern

Survivors of Nigeria Attack Struggle in IDP Camp

01/21/2024 Nigeria (ICC)

Survivors of a brutal, four-day attack that claimed the lives of more than 200 Nigerian Christians are struggling to start over in IDP camps that lack necessities. Villagers in Plateau State accused radical Fulani militias of carrying out the attacks, yet no arrests have been made.

An ICC staffer visited one IDP camp in the region that housed more than 1,000 Christians who had no safe access to water.

- *HOW TO PRAY: Pray for safe access to food, water, and shelter.*
- *Pray for the perpetrators of the attack to come to know Christ.*
- *Pray for comfort for all those who are grieving after this attack.*

Two Malaysian Filmmakers Charged with Blasphemy

01/20/2024 Malaysia (ICC)

Two Malaysian filmmakers face up to one year each in jail for a movie that explored differences and similarities between religions in Malaysia. Authorities have charged them under strict blasphemy laws, specifically “deliberately intended to hurt other people’s religious feelings by uttering words and placing objects in the person’s sight.” The filmmakers were released on bail.

- *HOW TO PRAY: Pray for all of their charges to be dropped.*
- *Pray for blasphemy laws in Malaysia and around the world to be overturned.*
- *Pray for the release of anyone wrongfully in prison for blasphemy.*

North Korea Again Tops List of Worst Christian Persecutors

01/20/2024 North Korea (ICC)

North Korea has again topped Open Door’s World Watchlist of the 50 countries with the worst record and levels of Christian persecution. International Christian Concern (ICC) has regularly highlighted the atrocities and suffering that North Korean Christians face under Kim Jong Un’s tyrannical regime. ICC included the hermit kingdom in its comprehensive 2023 annual Persecutors of the Year report.

- *HOW TO PRAY: Pray for protection for those living under oppression in North Korea.*
- *Pray for the gospel to spread through the nation.*
- *Pray for a peaceful end to the ruling Kim regime.*

Three Churches Raided by Extremists, Pastors Arrested

01/18/2024 India (ICC)

Three churches in India, were forced to close after a mob of extremists stormed their regular Sunday morning services. The attackers ransacked the homes where congregants were gathered and warned them of further consequences should they continue to meet for worship. After the attack, three pastors were arrested and falsely charged with alleged ‘forced conversion activities.’

- *HOW TO PRAY: Pray for all charges against the pastors to be dropped.*
- *Pray for protection for this congregation from further attack.*
- *Pray for equal treatment of Christians under the law in India.*

From Voice of the Martyrs TÜRKIYE (TURKEY)

RESTRICTED

CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION IN TÜRKIYE (TURKEY) OVERVIEW:

The gospel spread throughout what is now Türkiye in the first century, and the region remained under Christian rule for centuries, beginning in the fourth century. Now, however, fewer than 1 percent of Turks are Christians. Turks are proud of their nation, which has seen rapid industrial growth and modernization. Unfortunately, Islam is considered by most Turks to be part of their national identity; it is hard for them to imagine leaving Islam even if they know little about its teachings and do not practice its tenets. Christians in Türkiye have limited freedom of worship. While there are few Turkish churches, believers boldly share Christ with their countrymen. Ongoing changes in Türkiye’s government have limited missionary activity and increased pressure on the small Christian community.

MAJOR RELIGION:

96 percent of Turks are Sunni Muslims who view Islam as a core part of their identity, even though most are not devout. Fewer than 1 percent of Turks are Christians.

PERSECUTOR:

Believers face a range of challenges from family members, neighbors, employers and the government. It is not uncommon for the government to assign police officers to a pastor or church for “protection” from threats by Islamic leaders. This is a way to monitor the activities of pastors and churches.

WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW CHRIST IN TÜRKIYE:

Pastors have been targeted in sophisticated assassination plots, and a missionary was murdered in 2019. Another missionary and two Turkish believers were brutally murdered in a highly publicized 2007 incident. Evangelism faces significant opposition in Türkiye, and Christian converts from Islam are harassed and pressured from all sides. Believers are opposed by their families, communities and all levels of government. Mature expatriate believers — many of whom have lived in Türkiye for decades — have long served in Turkish churches; however, the Turkish government has recently targeted these foreign workers for expulsion.

ACCESS TO BIBLES:

Bibles can be legally distributed in Türkiye, but there are few distribution points.

VOM WORK:

VOM responds to persecution and supports front-line workers’ Bible distribution and outreach efforts.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- *Pray that new Turkish church leaders will arise to replace deported foreign workers.*

- *Pray that efforts to reach university teachers and students will be fruitful. Pray for a pastor who has not been allowed to see his daughter for several years because of his faith.*
- *Pray for university students and teachers who have asked for Bibles and information about Christ.*
- *Pray for Arab and Persian ministries working among refugees.*
- *Pray that God will strengthen missionaries facing deportation and guide those already deported.*

From Voice of the Martyrs

icommittoprayer.com

Jan. 25, 2024 | Mexico

Bold Witness Beaten 40 Times

Gabriela lives in a rural village in Oaxaca, Mexico, where members of her Mixteca community adhere to Christo-paganism, a syncretistic blend of pagan practices and Roman Catholicism that is opposed to the gospel. Because of her boldness in sharing her faith, she has been attacked by her neighbors as well as her husband, who is embarrassed by her commitment to Christ. She has been beaten an estimated 40 times and hospitalized on several occasions. Despite this opposition, she continues to make outreach trips into the Mixteca regions of the mountains of Oaxaca to spread the gospel where few others can go.

Jan. 18, 2024 | India

Digital Resources Transform Hearts

Bibles and SD cards that contain Bibles as well as other Christian materials are having a profound impact in India. One recipient, Angira, said, “I received an SD card that would change our lives. As we began listening to its contents, we discovered the teachings of Jesus Christ, which resonated

deeply within us. Eventually, we made the decision to embrace our faith and received baptism. Today, we are proud members of the local church, actively engaging with our community by sharing the gospel with others.”

- *Pray for Angira and thousands of others in India who have come to faith in Christ and grown in their walk with the Lord because of these resources. Pray also for those who produce and distribute them.*

Prayer Calendar from Open Doors

Libya

January 26

**Names changed for security reasons*

Pray Saleh’s prayer for Yemen: “I hope that soon there will be Christians in every corner who go out to share the gospel in word and deed.”

- *Pray for Saleh as he disciples Yemeni believers.*

January 27

Saleh dreams of the church spreading past Yemen’s borders.

- *Pray that the church would expand to “parts of Africa and the rest of the Arabian Peninsula.”*

Eritrea

January 28

- *Pray for Eritrean President Afwerki—that God would change his heart and He would let Christians follow Jesus freely.*

January 29

Eritrea uses the fear of inhumane prisons to discourage any evangelism.

- *Pray for all Eritrean Christians imprisoned for their faith.*

January 30

After meeting Jesus, Abdullah* relentlessly shared the gospel and was imprisoned for it.

- *Pray that God would raise up more believers like Abdullah.*

January 31

After two years in prison, Abdullah tragically died of illness.

- *Pray that God would comfort his widow and strengthen her as she raises their seven children.*

Iran

February 1

- *Pray for a revival in Iran so powerful and explosive that the Iranian authorities can’t deny it.*
- *Pray that many in power will find the love of Jesus.*

From Barnabas Aid Prayer Diary

FRIDAY 26

A new church building, seating 750 people, was opened on Sunday, October 8 in Yeşilköy, Istanbul, Turkey, and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan attended the inauguration ceremony. This is remarkable given the Turkish state’s record of unjustly expropriating 8 churches and other church properties, adding greatly to the difficulties of the Christian communities in Turkey since the formation of the Turkish Republic in 1923.

- *Pray that the unprecedented event will be the start of a new and more positive*

attitude by the Turkish authorities to their country's Christian minorities.

SATURDAY 27

A 91-year-old Christian in the south-eastern Turkish province of Mardin was killed on November 6, 2023. Gevriye Ego was ambushed in front of his house in the Christian village of Enhil and shot multiple times in the head. He died in hospital. Christians have lived in south-east Turkey for many centuries but are now a small minority.

- *Pray for comfort and protection for these believers and particularly for Gevriye's family and friends.*

SUNDAY 28

- *Lord Jesus, we pray for Your followers in countries where they face persecution from "rulers and authorities". Give them grace not to worry ahead of time how to speak and defend themselves if they are arrested. May they face the future with peace in their hearts, knowing that You will give them the words and wisdom they will need when the time comes. Give them assurance that You will strengthen them to face prison or torture, if that is Your will for them. May they be effective witnesses, so that even their persecutors may come to know and love You. (Luke 12:11; 21:12-15)*

MONDAY 29

"The religious freedoms in our country are steadily, increasingly eroded," wrote a Christian leader from a Central Asian country in November 2023. "The situation in [City X] is also intensified, and it is now eight years since the local authorities have been trying to prohibit brothers and sisters to meet for

worship, fellowship and prayer." The most recent incident was the forced closure of a church building, so that believers now gather in small groups in homes. Muslim religious leaders in X are also "concocting a variety of obstacles to prevent believers from meeting", adds the Christian leader.

- *Pray that our brothers and sisters will be able to keep meeting to pray together and build each other up in the faith, whatever the pressures and problems that face them.*

TUESDAY 30

Christians in Uzbekistan thanked the Lord for answered prayers after the donations of Barnabas supporters funded repairs to a registered church (meaning a building in which it is legal to gather for prayer). We replaced the roof and repaired walls and flooring. Three church congregations share the building, enabling them to meet legally. It is also used by the host January/February 2024 9 church for twice-weekly Bible studies, for its youth and children's ministries, regular prayer meetings and for training courses.

- *Give thanks for this vibrant Christian community. Pray that their joy in the Lord will be a light to others (Matthew 5:14).*

WEDNESDAY 31

Christians in a Central Asian country ask us to pray that "brothers and sisters experiencing persecution would not be intimidated by the threats but continue attending services and witnessing. Regardless of the opposition from the enemy of the souls of men, we still have wide open opportunities for evangelizing and witnessing to people around us."

- *Praise God for the courage of our fellow-Christians in that country and ask the Lord to continue to add to their*

numbers as more people put their faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Pray also that the Lord will encourage and help them as they face the hardships of winter right now.

February

THURSDAY 1

“This will allow the church to stand for years to come,” said a spokesman for a church in Kazakhstan. Barnabas funded crucial repairs to this registered church building, paying a specialized company to seal the basement that had been flooded every spring for the past ten years by melting snow. The church, which includes converts from Islam, began over 30 years ago, with its members meeting in libraries and halls before they had their own church building.

- *Give thanks for the completion of these vital repairs and pray that the building will develop as a center where Christians can grow spiritually and in number in the years ahead.*

From Help the Persecuted

AYLIN, TURKEY

Aylin fled to Turkey from Iran when she faced threats because of her conversion to Christianity. She serves with our team through an online discipleship program. She recently lost her father. She is struggling with the loss, especially because she didn't get to see him before he passed.

- *Lord, we praise You for being a God of all comfort. Would You please be near Aylin, drawing so close to her that she feels a new intimacy with You? Please raise up members of her church to come around her, and please give her deep peace in Yourself.*

ABASI, EGYPT

Abasi and his wife faced violent persecution

in Sudan when they shared the gospel with their friends and family. They fled to Egypt, and they are struggling to find jobs that will provide for their basic needs. Their family is threatening them, working with the secret police to force them back to Sudan.

- *Lord, thank You for the amazing faithfulness and passion for the gospel that Abasi and his wife have. Please help them rebuild their lives in Egypt, providing them good, stable work and protecting them from every threat from their family.*

EDRICE, EGYPT

When Edrice became a Christian, her husband threatened to evict her and began persecuting her. She is in search of a new place to live away from him.

- *Lord, we praise You for Edrice's salvation! Please protect her from her husband and give her guidance and direction as she looks for a new place to live. Please comfort her heart amid loss and surround her with the Body of Christ.*

MEHDI, MOROCCO

After Mehdi declared his faith, his family forced him to leave the house. Now, he is afraid and is denying his faith to avoid further persecution.

- *Lord, we ask that You help Mehdi to remain courageous as he faces so much loss for following You. Please help him find a new place to live and bring him to a place of safety where there is a strong local church body.*

ARIF, MOROCCO

Arif declared his faith to his family...and we immediately lost touch with him. We do not know where he is or what is going on.

- *Lord, we praise You for drawing Arif to*

Yourself! Please be with him and protect him, covering him with Your arms as he faces what is most likely extreme persecution. Please make a way for him to get back in touch with our team so that we can help him.

MORAD, ALGERIA

When Morad shared his Christian faith with his wife, she went to court with evidence of his conversion from Islam. They forced him to get a divorce.

- *Lord, we praise You for Morad's steadfastness in Yourself even as he walks through a painful divorce. Please bring him deep comfort in the midst of so much loss, surrounding him with the body of Christ. Please help our team minister to him and encourage his soul.*

MUNIR, IRAQ

When Munir shared the gospel with his wife and his son, they began to persecute him. Now, he cannot find work because of his faith...and his wife blames him for it.

- *Lord, we ask that You soften the hearts of Munir's wife and son, bringing them into saving knowledge of Yourself. Please do a miracle and provide him a good, stable job that helps him provide for his family.*

LAYLA, LEBANON

When Layla shared about her faith in Jesus, her husband refused to acknowledge it and immediately demanded a divorce. Now, she is facing the end of her marriage and losing her entire family.

- *Lord, we ask that You comfort Layla as she grieves a deep loss. Please remind her that she has an eternal family in the Church, and please help our team minister to her, providing healing and comfort in the name of Jesus.*

FIELD MINISTRY TEAM MEMBERS, YEMEN

Our two new Field Ministry Team members in Yemen are about to begin training with our team. This comes at a time when Yemen is facing increasing instability because of terrorist groups, making the work of these two men even more vital and precarious.

- *Lord, we thank You for providing these two new team members! We ask that You cover them with Your protection. We thank You for all the Yemeni believers that You have ordained for them to help and ask You to pave the way for the persecuted Church to flourish in Yemen, even as conflict rages on.*

FIELD MINISTRY TEAM MEMBERS, IRAQ

As violence increases in Iraq, the work our four Field Ministry Team members are doing to Rescue, Restore, and Rebuild the lives of persecuted believers is becoming increasingly dangerous.

- *Lord, please protect the lives of our team members in Iraq, covering them with Your peace as they risk everything for the sake of the gospel going forth. Please provide a way for them to continue to do ministry in the midst of unsettling times.*

ANSWERED PRAYERS

FADI, EGYPT

When Fadi's husband became cruel to her and ultimately converted to Islam, he sold everything and fled to another city in Egypt with their sons. Fadi was left destitute and was forced to put her daughter in an orphanage. When our team met with her and discovered her needs, we knew that six months of living expenses would help her begin to rebuild her life. In response, she said, "I will remain grateful for your generosity throughout my life because I was hopeless about having my own home with my children. After my husband converted to Islam and I

returned to my family, this grant enabled me to purchase a piece of land. Through prayer, the Lord guided me to start building a room where I can settle with my children.”

- *Lord, we praise You for the hope You bring to even the darkest situations. Thank You for the privilege of praying for and walking alongside Fadi. Thank You for how she has found new hope in You because of the needs that have been met. Please guide her as she begins to rebuild her life and bless her as she grows in faith through the spiritual encouragement of our team.* He said “You gave me my life back. My kids went to school this year because of your support! Thank you.”

ANSWERED PRAYERS OF 2023

As our team looks back on 2023, we are overwhelmed by the goodness of God. He opens doors we don’t even know exist, provides connections that can be described only as divine, and strengthens our team and partners like you to be constant in prayer for the persecuted.

Mission Eurasia Prayer Initiative

Our national leaders in **Poland** would like to share an urgent prayer request with you. Please pray for our colleagues Taras and Julia, and for Julia’s brother Dima. Dima joined the Ukrainian military at the beginning of the war and was taken prisoner by the Russians in the battle of Mariupol. He is still being held in a Russian prison, and though he is a strong believer who has shared his faith with other soldiers, he needs your prayers.

- *Please pray for his family and for his quick release.*

Mission Eurasia will serve as a co-sponsor of the **International Religious Freedom (IRF) Summit 2024** in Washington D.C.

from January 29th – February 1st. Several prominent religious and political leaders that we partner with will be coming from Ukraine.

- *Please pray for safety in travel, a deeper understanding of the critical issues impacting Ukraine for those attending the summit, and that the Lord use this time to advance His work and His gospel.*

While both the Latin and Orthodox Christmas seasons have passed, Mission Eurasia’s Gift of Hope outreach during this time has been very fruitful.

- *Please pray for the **children and families** who received Gift of Hope boxes and Scriptures. Please pray that the Lord would open their hearts and that they would receive God’s gift of salvation in Jesus Christ.*

During this time of **war in Ukraine**, the need for Christian leadership has only been heightened. Mission Eurasia’s Leadership Development Initiative for Ukraine provides pastoral and ministerial training to local church leaders from regions where the fighting remains intense.

- *Please pray for both the church leaders who will receive training and for our colleagues who will provide the training. Pray that the Lord would protect our colleagues as many will be away from their families and living in an active combat zone.*

In the remote regions of **Russia**, there are many unreached people groups who practice Buddhism and shamanism. Our colleagues travel far distances to bring these people the gospel in their own languages, and often hold house church services where they worship Jesus Christ together.

- *Please pray for Mission Eurasia's Unreached People Group Initiative (UPGI), through which our national leaders are seeking to bring the light of Christ to the darkest corners of Eurasia.*

From The Roys Report

Opinion: The Slaughter of Christians in Nigeria Requires International Response

By Rick Plasterer

January 23, 2024

The persecution of Christians in Nigeria seems to be intensifying, with continuing reports of people being killed in the north of Nigeria, and its so-called “Middle Belt” of farmland.

This is where the mostly Christian farmers are being killed, their crops destroyed, and villages and homes burnt by radical Islamic groups—Fulani herdsman, Boko Haram, and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP).

However, the worst attacks often come during Christian holidays. And one of the worst attacks yet, the slaughter of 200 Christians in Plateau State in the Middle Belt, occurred this past Christmas, from Dec. 23-25.

Atrocities on Christian Holidays

This attack recalls the Pentecost Sunday attack on St. Francis Catholic Church in Owo, Ondo State, in southwest Nigeria in 2022. There 50 people were killed. A video clip of the church with pools of blood on the floor immediately after the attack in this article from LifeSiteNews.com is simply horrific.

The choice of a Christian holiday to attack Christians highlights a key controversy which is raised whenever there is attention to the killing in Nigeria. Is this simply a “farmer/herder” conflict, driven ultimately by economic factors, in particular, desertification of the Sahel (the semi-arid transitional zone south of the Sahara Desert)? Or, is it

a basically a religious clash, with Muslims attacking Christians in an effort to seize the property of Christian farmers and Islamize Nigeria?

The governor of Plateau state, Caleb Mutfwang, clearly stated after the attacks that what is happening in Nigeria is genocide. The word may be overused in our day but does express that what is happening is not a “clash,” or a “conflict,” or “sectarian violence.” These terms would indicate that there are two sides fighting. But there is only one side participating in the bloodshed—radical Muslim groups, who attack Christians with the sole objective of killing them and seizing their property.

Configuration of the Crisis

As noted by Jeff King, President of International Christian Concern, in a video clip interviewing a Nigerian pastor, when the British ruled Nigeria, they relied on northern Muslims, and particularly the Fulani tribe (with millions of members across the Sahel) to rule the country.

This left northern Muslims in charge of the military and security apparatus. And today, the Muslim dominance continues.

Former President Muhammadu Buhari was a Fulani. And the Nigerian army is often reluctant to act against Islamic terrorists and sometimes is complicit in attacks, arresting or attacking civilian guards fighting against the violence.

TruthNigeria, which attempts to report on ongoing slaughter and overt negligence of Nigerian authorities, reported on January 7, “Nigerian army soldiers are standing as watchmen for Fulani terrorists who have moved into some of the conquered villages. . . . The terrorist invaders will prevent the return of the 10,000 displaced residents, the majority of whom are Christians, according to victims and humanitarian aid givers.”

Additionally, the army has been arresting the civilian guards, who attempt to protect the northern communities from Islamic terrorists.

Meanwhile, the attacked villages of Mutfet, Ndun, Mbong, and Yelwa Nono

still have no security presence. Faced with enormous criticism from the West regarding the Christmas massacre, the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission has ordered broadcasters in Nigeria to stop reporting on the killing and violence.

Life After an Attack

But for Christians in Nigeria, the sorrow at the loss of loved ones, property, and livelihood as they were preparing to celebrate Christmas is compounded by the immediate need for food and shelter. They also face the question of how they will rebuild their lives and communities with no assurance (despite promises) of security.

A Nigerian pastor who lost his home in the Christmas attack spoke movingly of having lost seven family members as well. Like many others, he lost everything in his home, “bought foodstuffs, clothing, and whatever. It was a furnished house, but it is burnt, and even the church that is by my side was burnt.”

The hapless residents of northern Nigeria are doing what they can to respond to their plight. The civilian guards, while themselves apparently the occasional targets of the army, are one response. In another response to the Christmas massacre, residents of the affected areas rallied in Jos, the capital of Plateau State.

The displacement of people from devastated and dangerous areas has resulted in multitudes of displaced persons. Last October it was reported that over two million persons were displaced by the “farmer/herder” conflict in Benue State (south of Plateau State).

Persistent Government Complicity

As I discussed in a previous article on the Nigerian crisis, the Nigerian government is often complicit in the violence.

Vatican News estimated that 52,250 people have been killed in the last 14 years, and 18,000 churches have been set on fire. Such statistics testify either to a government unable or unwilling to stop the violence.

The Director of the International Society for Civil Liberties and the Rule of Law

(InterSociety), Emeka Umeagbalasi, has accused the government of encouraging the bloodshed.

“The level of violence is expected to continue, and it has continued to rise because the authorities are fueling the crisis,” Umeagbalasi said. “The authorities are behind the killings. The authorities have injected the security forces with jihadist bad blood, to the extent that the security forces have left what they are supposed to do, and they started going after people who are not lawless citizens.”

Meanwhile, Umeagbalasi maintained, the government is quick to protect Fulani Muslims.

“In Plateau State or in northern Nigeria, in any of the troubled spots, if a Fulani man is killed, you will see security forces and government spending millions (in local currency) in sponsoring the high publicity of that Fulani man killed . . . When defenseless citizens are killed in their hundreds, the government does not raise any eyebrows. That is to say that in Nigeria there are those that are created to be killed, and there are those that are created to live.”

A member of the Nigerian House of Representatives, David Lalu, has suggested that communities should take up arms against the jihadists, but Umeagbalasi believes that will simply lead to more violence.

Other branches of government in Nigeria also have jihadist elements in them, Umeagbalasi maintained, noting, “They now sing jihadist Islamic songs.”

After a horrific killing, such as that of last Christmas or Pentecost 2022, there may be strong denunciations of violence, and promises of justice. But in reality, the government and military seem to have a “nonchalant attitude” toward the killing, not responding to calls for help and even providing security for terrorists, as noted by Truth Nigeria.

Advocates and activists concerned with the slaughter agree on the inadequacy of the government’s response. Franklyne Ogbunwezeh of Prevention at Christian

Solidarity International in Switzerland, recently claimed that the killings in central Nigeria show the jihadists' intention of wiping out the Christian population, and the government's complicity in the bloodshed by ignoring pleas for help.

Similarly, Maria Lozano, a representative for the papal relief group Aid to the Church in Need, maintained that "lack of response from the government" to pleas for help during and after attacks has resulted in increasing violence over the years. While the government may express outrage at a particularly grievous attack, it does not offer "tangible support." As a result, Christians churches have had to take "primary responsibility of providing assistance."

Another well-placed source, Sean Nelson of the Alliance Defending Freedom International, has said of the Christmas massacre that "the scale of this attack is shocking . . . If no real actions are taken after these attacks this Christmas, it can only be deliberate indifference to the lives of these Christian communities."

He added that while attacks on Christians in Nigeria's Middle Belt have gone on for years, they have increased in the past year.

Killing in the New Year

Killings are reported on an almost weekly or daily basis in Nigeria. Since the Christmas massacre, terrorists slaughtered 41 Christians and kidnapped others in Kaduna State.

The attack occurred on January 3. It was reported that "the terrorists who were armed with deadly weapons invaded the communities, killing children, women, men and the elderly who were unable to escape from the attackers."

The location of the terrorist camp responsible for the violence in that part of Nigeria is known, and has been raided by the army. But nearby communities never have peace.

Similarly, on January 5, 14 persons, including a pastor, were killed in Yobe State by members of the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). The pastor was killed at the church, while the others were killed in their homes.

Open Doors World Watch List 2024 reports, "More believers are killed for their faith in Nigeria each year than everywhere else in the world combined. The attacks are often brutal in nature and can involve destruction of properties, abductions for ransom, sexual violence, and death. Believers are stripped of their livelihoods and driven from their homes, leaving a trail of grief and trauma."

The previous 2023 list raised Nigeria's ranking among the 50 worst countries persecuting Christians from 7 to 6. It also declared:

"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 . . . 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."

What Can Be Done

Because of the denial of the basically religious character of the ongoing slaughter by the Nigerian government, which is shared by the Biden Administration State Department and much of the Western establishment, the crisis does not receive the attention it should in the public mind of the West.

A particularly egregious example is the Wikipedia article on the "History of Nigeria." The article inaccurately states that Nigeria was placed on the "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) list in 2018, during the tenure of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

However, Nigeria was placed on the CPC list on Dec. 7, 2020, shortly before Trump left office, due to Assistant Secretary of State Robert Destro's on the ground investigation. The investigation found that the main problem was the Nigerian government's failure to provide adequate security for its citizens.

However, the crisis in Nigeria may start to receive the attention it deserves in the Western mainstream.

Amnesty International (AI) recently stated

its concern over the increasing violence, declaring that the country is “living on a knife edge.”

Almost daily kidnapping for ransom leaves people in a state of constant fear, AI noted. The group also decried the abuses committed against victims, specifically “torture, rape, and starvation.”

Also taking note of the crisis is Pope Francis, who in response to the killings in Plateau State prayed that God would “free Nigeria from these horrors.”

This writer remembers where he was on Pentecost Sunday, 2022 when the horrific killings occurred at St. Francis Catholic Church in Ondo State. I was having a delightful Sunday dinner with relatives in the states.

Thinking of Nigeria from the vantage point of relative security in North America, it is frustrating that there is so little that can be done if the Nigerian government continues its policy of slowly eradicating the Christian populations of north and central Nigeria.

Persistent prayer is certainly part of the solution, and that can be offered regardless of government policies.

Continued publicity of the horrific nature of the crisis by organizations and individuals who can speak into the public square is crucial. Images and sounds, such as shown in the first link in this article should be particularly effective.

And of course, the restoration of Nigeria’s status as a Country of Particular Concern is another action which might move the Nigerian government to provide effective protection against violence. Yet another measure would be conditioning any aid from the United States to Nigeria on the Nigerian government implementing more effective policies to protect its citizens from killing and lawlessness.

We cannot determine the future in Nigeria. But we should do what we can to stop evil.