

Reports on Inter-religious violence in Nigeria, particularly in the South (Ibadan etc...)

In a section titled "Societal Abuses and Discrimination" (Section III.) the *US Department of State* religious freedom report for Nigeria states:

"Tension between Christians and Muslims remained acute in some areas, and conflicts of a seemingly socioeconomic or political nature often divided people along religious lines. Events, particularly of a religious tenor, occurring in other regions of the country or parts of the world, heightened tensions between religious groups. Religious differences often exacerbated ethnic differences. Competition for scarce resources, in concert with unequal and discriminatory employment practices, provoked violence between individuals of different religious or ethnic communities. Religion was also often a catalyst for hostility, used by politicians and others to foment discord." (US Department of State (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor) (19 September 2008) *Nigeria – International Religious Freedom Report*)

The annual report published by the *US Commission on International Religious Freedom* refers to religious violence in Nigeria as follows:

"Since 1999, more than 10,000 Nigerians have been killed in sectarian and communal attacks and reprisals between Muslims and Christians. The most serious of these clashes occurred in Kaduna state (February and May 2000 and November 2002); Jos, Plateau state (September 2001); Kano state and Yelwa, Plateau state (February-May 2004); and in northern and southeastern Nigeria, in the wake of the controversy over depictions of the Prophet Muhammad in the Danish press in February 2006 (see below). Ethnic and religious violence continued throughout the past year, although the number of deaths resulting from the violence decreased compared to previous years. Dozens of people were killed and dozens of churches and mosques were destroyed in communal violence in several towns and villages in southeastern Nigeria, the Middle Belt region, and northern Nigeria. In September 2007, rioting in the northern state of Kano resulted in the deaths of 10 Christians and the destruction of at least nine churches. At least 60 people were injured and more than 500 displaced. The rioting started after Muslim students from a public high school claimed that a Christian student had drawn a cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad on the wall of the school's mosque. A Kano state committee investigating the September attacks stated in November that 19 Christians were killed, not 10 as previously reported. In December 2007, at least 10 people were killed, more than 30 injured, and three churches burned in the northern state of Bauchi. Some 3,000 people fled their homes in the area of the clashes." (US Commission on International Religious Freedom (1 May 2008) *Annual Report 2008*)

This report also states:

"Despite the ongoing nature of sectarian violence, the number of those killed decreased in the past year due to a more rapid and effective response by security authorities. However, prosecution of those accused of instigating sectarian violence remains inadequate. Moreover, many Muslims and Christians

have been identified as perpetrators of violence over the years, but very few, if any, have been prosecuted or brought to justice.” (ibid)

An *IRIN News* report on religious violence which occurred in February 2006 states:

“At least 17 people, including a Catholic priest, were killed and 30 churches burned in the northeast Nigerian city of Maiduguri when Muslims protesting cartoons caricaturing the Prophet Muhammad turned on local Christians, police said. Nigerian police spokesman Haz Iwendi said a crowd of protesters in the predominantly Muslim city targeted the Christian minority, burning and looting their shops and churches on Saturday. ‘We can confirm that 17 persons were killed, 30 churches and five hotels were also burnt,’ Iwendi told IRIN.” (IRIN News (20 February 2006) *Nigeria: Muhammad Cartoon Protests Spark Attacks on Christians*)

A *Voice of America* report on the killing of Muslims in revenge attacks in the south of Nigeria states:

“The death toll from five days of Muslim-Christian violence in Nigeria is up to at least 64 following more violence in the south. Christian mobs in the city of Onitsha killed at least 19 people, mostly Muslims, Wednesday. Witnesses describe a bloody scene with Christian rioters using machetes to slash and mutilate their victims. At one point, soldiers used force against the rioters to block more attacks. The violence in Onitsha began Tuesday when at least 12 people were killed during Christian attacks on Muslims. Those riots were in reprisal for riots targeting Christians in Nigeria's largely Muslim north. At least 33 people, mostly Christians, were killed when Muslims rioted in the cities of Bauchi and Maiduguri earlier in the week.” (Voice of America (22 February 2006) *At Least 64 Muslims Killed in 5 Days of Riots in Southern Nigeria*)

An *IRIN News* report on religious violence in Bauchi State in 2006 states:

“Mobs of young men rampaged through the predominantly Muslim town, looting shops and burning churches and other buildings belonging to Christians. Over 1,000 people sought refuge in police stations, according to police officials.” (IRIN News (26 September 2006) *Nigeria: Living in Fear As Tensions Rise*)

In a paragraph headed “Violent precedent” this report states:

“In similar violence in February, at least 150 people were killed and 50,000 displaced in a week of riots across six of the country's 36 states after Muslims attacked Christians in the northeastern city of Maiduguri. They were ostensibly angry over cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed published in Denmark.” (ibid)

Religious violence in Bauchi is also referred to in an *IRIN News* report which states:

“At least six people have been killed and 30 critically injured since clashes between Muslim and Christian communities in the north-central Nigerian city of

Bauchi broke out on 11 December, Red Cross workers and residents said. Some 3,000 people have fled their homes in the area of the fighting, witnesses said. The government has ordered a 9pm to 6am curfew and closed the local university, which has often been the site of violent clashes.” (IRIN News (13 December 2007) *Nigeria: At Least Six Dead in Sectarian Violence*)

See also *IRIN News* report which states:

“Nigeria has a long history of Muslim-Christian tension and periodic violent clashes, especially in the north. In December 2007 sectarian riots between Muslims and Christians over a mosque construction left six dead and dozens injured in Bauchi city, while many houses were burnt. In February 2006, 30 people were killed in an uprising when a school teacher allegedly made blasphemous remarks. In the worst recent rioting in 2004, hundreds of people were killed in waves of sectarian violence in Kano, ostensibly in retribution for similar attacks in Plateau state, central Nigeria.” (IRIN News (4 February 2008) *Nigeria: Deadly Sectarian Riot Over Alleged Blasphemy*)

A *Christian Solidarity Worldwide* report on this violence states:

“The violence erupted after a young woman was accused of blaspheming against the prophet Mohammed. According to local sources, the young woman had spurned the advances of a young Muslim man on the previous day. In a last effort the man appealed to her to speak to him ‘in the name of the Messenger’ to which she responded that she knew no messenger. On the following morning the youth attacked her house accompanied by a crowd, claiming that she had blasphemed against the prophet Mohammed. When the girl fled to a police station for protection, a pursuing mob proceeded to set fire to the building. Policemen responded by firing live ammunition, killing a young man in his 20s and triggering a rampage in which police and Christian targets were attacked and their homes and churches destroyed.” (Christian Solidarity Worldwide (8 February 2008) *Nigeria: Churches destroyed in Shari’ah State during wave of religious violence*)

A *Reuters Foundation* report on a recent outbreak of religious violence in the city of Jos states:

“Clashes between Muslim and Christian gangs triggered by a disputed local government election have killed around 400 people in the central Nigerian city of Jos, the worst unrest in the country for years. The city lies at the crossroads between Nigeria’s Muslim north and its mostly-Christian south, but the conflict is about much more than religious beliefs.” (Reuters Foundation (30 November 2008) *Q&A - What are the implications of clashes in Nigeria?*)

In a paragraph headed “What does it mean for Nigerian stability?” this report states:

“Nigeria has experienced and weathered similar bouts of unrest in the past. Thousands have died in religious and ethnic violence since the start of the decade.” (ibid)

A *BBC News* report states:

“Hundreds of people are reported to have been killed in central Nigeria after Christians and Muslims clashed over the result of a local election. A Muslim charity in the town of Jos says it collected more than 300 bodies, and fatalities are also expected among Christians.” (BBC News (29 November 2008) *Riots 'kill hundreds in Nigeria'*)

See also *BBC News* report which states:

“Homes were destroyed during the clashes, with mosques and churches burned, as gangs of men from the Muslim Hausa community and the mainly Christian ethnic groups, armed with machetes fought. The information minister for Plateau State, Nuhu Gagara, said about 200 people died.” (BBC News (29 November 2008) *Nigerian city tense after riots*)

A report from *Human Rights Watch* states:

“The violence in Jos, the capital of Plateau State in central Nigeria, began early on the morning of November 28, 2008, following a disputed local election in which supporters of the opposition All Nigeria Peoples Party accused the governing People's Democratic Party of rigging the election results. Over the next three days, clashes between rival Muslims and Christians, some of whom on both sides were armed with firearms and machetes, left several hundred people dead, according to local sources in Jos. There was also widespread destruction in the town as mobs burned down homes, mosques, and churches. Thousands of residents have been forced to flee their homes.” (Human Rights Watch (1 December 2008) *Nigeria: Prevent Further Bloodshed in Jos*)

Reports of religious violence in Ibadan were not found among sources available to the RDC.

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

References:

BBC News (30 November 2008) *Nigerian city tense after riots*
<http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7757398.stm?>

(Accessed 18 December 2008)

BBC News (29 November 2008) *Riots 'kill hundreds in Nigeria'*

<http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7756695.stm?>

(Accessed 18 December 2008)

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (8 February 2008) *Nigeria: Churches destroyed in Shari'ah State during wave of religious violence*

<http://dynamic.csw.org.uk/article.asp?t=press&id=697>

(Accessed 18 December 2008)

Human Rights Watch (1 December 2008) *Nigeria: Prevent Further Bloodshed in Jos*

<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/12/01/nigeria-prevent-further-bloodshed-jos?print>

(Accessed 18 December 2008)

IRIN News (4 February 2008) *Nigeria: Deadly Sectarian Riot Over Alleged Blasphemy*

<http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200802041362.html>

(Accessed 18 December 2008)

IRIN News (13 December 2007) *Nigeria: At Least Six Dead in Sectarian Violence*

<http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200712140568.html>

(Accessed 18 December 2008)

IRIN News (26 September 2006) *Nigeria: Living in Fear As Tensions Rise*

<http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200609260749.html>

(Accessed 18 December 2008)

IRIN News (20 February 2006) *Nigeria: Muhammad Cartoon Protests Spark Attacks on Christians*

<http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200602200094.html>

(Accessed 19 December 2008)

Reuters Foundation (30 November 2008) *Q&A - What are the implications of clashes in Nigeria?*

<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/PANA-7LWCXU?OpenDocument&RSS20=02-P>

(Accessed 18 December 2008)

US Commission on International Religious Freedom (1 May 2008) *Annual Report 2008*

<http://www.uscirf.gov/images/AR2008/nigeria.pdf>

(Accessed 18 December 2008)

US Department of State (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor) (19 September 2008) *Nigeria – International Religious Freedom Report*

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108385.htm>

(Accessed 18 December 2008)

Voice of America (22 February 2006) *At Least 64 Muslims Killed in 5 Days of Riots in Southern Nigeria*

<http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2006-02/2006-02-22-voa52.cfm>

(Accessed 19 December 2008)

Sources Consulted:

All Africa

BBC News

Danish Immigration Service

European Country of Origin Information

Google

IRIN News

Irish Times

Landinfo

LexisNexis

Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database

UK Home Office

UNHCR Refworld

US Department of State