

Hansard: Written Question on Nigeria: Overseas Aid

19 October 2020

**Baroness Cox**: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the situation in Plateau State, Nigeria; and what (1) financial, and (2) technical, assistance they intend to provide (a) to strengthen the rule of law, and (b) to protect freedom of religion or belief, in that region.

Answered 2 November 2020

**Baroness Sugg:** The Government condemns all incidents of violence in Nigeria, including recent attacks in Plateau State. Intercommunal violence continues to have a devastating effect on local communities across multiple states. We are working with Nigeria to respond to the drivers of conflict, which include disputes over natural resources, competition over land, and population growth. We have provided technical support to the Nigerian Government for the development of the National Livestock Transformation Plan. The Plan aims to promote cattle-rearing in one place, rather than the traditional nomadic practice, to limit competition over land and resources leading to violence. The Plan is currently being implemented in eight Middle Belt states in Nigeria, including Plateau state. The UK is firmly committed to promoting and protecting the right to freedom of religion or belief around the world. The British High Commissioner and her team are increasing their engagement with state governments in areas affected by the violence, including Plateau state. The High Commission team have met with Governors; Christian and Muslim faith leaders; Fulani communities; NGOs active in reconciliation, and affected communities including displaced persons. We are also developing a new conflict, security and justice programme, which aims to reduce levels of intercommunal violence through the development of more effective conflict-management systems.

We will continue to encourage the Government of Nigeria to take urgent action to protect those at risk of intercommunal violence, to bring perpetrators to justice and to implement long-term solutions that address the root causes of violence and meet the needs of all communities. To strengthen the rule of law across Nigeria, we have supported a new police bill, engaging the National Assembly and providing technical support to National Assembly members considering the draft legislation. On 17th September President Buhari signed the Police Establishment Act into law. The bill seeks to create a more efficient and effective police force that is based on the principles of accountability and transparency; and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The UK Government is deeply concerned by violence during protests in Lagos and other major cities in Nigeria, which has tragically claimed a number of lives. We will continue to work with the Nigerian Government and international and civil society partners in support of police reform and improvements in the human rights records and accountability of the Nigerian security services.



Hansard: Written Question on Nigeria: Christianity

19 October 2020

**Baroness Cox**: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Nigeria to encourage the investigation of the number of Christians killed in that country since 2001.

Answered 2 November 2020

**Baroness Sugg:** The Government condemns all violence against civilians in Nigeria, irrespective of their religion. Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa (ISWA) seek to undermine the Nigerian constitutional right to freedom of religion or belief by deliberately attacking both Christian and Muslim communities and religious leaders. We assess that the majority of Boko Haram and ISWA's victims have been Muslim. Intercommunal violence across multiple states in Nigeria is having a devastating impact on communities of all faiths.

We have made clear to the Nigerian authorities at the highest levels the importance of protecting all civilians, including ethnic and religious minorities, and human rights for all. The Minister for Africa discussed the impact of violence in Nigeria with President Buhari's Chief of Staff in June. We will continue to engage with the federal and state authorities to stress the importance of transparent investigations that respect human rights and the rule of law.



Hansard: Written Question on Nigeria: Christianity

19 October 2020

**Baroness Cox**: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement by the Nigerian House of Representatives on 4 July 2018 declaring killings in predominantly Christian villages in Plateau State to be a genocide and calling on the federal government of Nigeria to establish orphanages in areas affected by violence.

Answered 2 November 2020

**Baroness Sugg:** The UK Government condemns all incidents of intercommunal violence in Nigeria. We have made clear to the Nigerian authorities at the highest levels the importance of protecting civilians, including ethnic and religious minorities, and human rights for all. We do not assess religious identity to be the principal driver of most incidents of intercommunal violence. The root causes are more complex and relate frequently to competition for resources and failures of governance.

We are aware of the advisory resolution passed by the Nigerian House of Representatives in July 2018. It is UK Government policy not to unilaterally determine whether genocide has occurred, in line with the Genocide Convention. This is a matter for competent courts and tribunals, including the International Criminal Court, after consideration of all the evidence, rather than governments or non-judicial bodies. We encourage additional measures by the Nigerian Government to protect children affected by conflict across the country.