

2.11. Christians in areas where they are a minority

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43.4 % of Nigeria’s population identifies as Christian (while 56.1 % as Muslim). In general, Christians are primarily concentrated in the southern regions of the country, whereas Muslims predominantly reside in the northern regions663 (for more information see Muslims in areas where they are a minority).The USDOS International Religious Freedom (IRF) report covering 2023 indicated that Christianity is dominant in the South-South, South-West, (including Lagos), and the South-East region, with Catholics, Anglicans, and Methodists, constituting the majority.664 The same source indicated that Evangelical Christians are growing rapidly in the North-Central, South-East, South-South, and South-West.665 Christians are a minority in northern Nigeria where Islam is predominant and sharia law is applied.666 The states where sharia law has been adopted as both civil and criminal law667 are Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara.668 The USDOS IRF report indicated that even though Islam is the dominant religion in the North-West and North-East regions, ‘significant Christian populations reside there as well’, and that Christians and Muslims ‘reside in approximately equal numbers in the North Central Region’.669

Without prohttps://www.euaa.europa.eu/nigeria-country-focus/210-individuals-targeted-boko-haramviding further details, some sources indicated that, in northern states under sharia law, Christians are discriminated against670 and reportedly treated as ‘second-class citizens’.671 In the North-East of the country, where Boko Haram predominantly operates, non-Muslims, including Christians, have been subjected to extreme violence by the group. See for more detailed information Individuals targeted by Boko Haram.

Violent attacks against Christians as well as nonreligious individuals have been reported in recent years.672 Violence against Christians included forced displacement, indiscriminate killings, and the destruction of homes, churches and livelihoods.673 Christians, particularly men, are killed in attacks, and women often kidnapped and targeted for sexual violence.674 According to a 2024 report by the Observatory for Religious Freedom in Africa (ORFA) on religious persecution in Nigeria,675 Christian captives are more likely to be executed by their captors than Muslim ones; while the later are released if they cannot afford a ransom, Christian captives are murdered even after ransom is paid.676

Although Christians have been more vulnerable in northern states,677 violence against them is spreading into the Middle Belt and further south.678 Christians have faced attacks within the

context of intercommunal violence679 between the mostly Muslim herders and largely Christian farming communities.680 While the conflict between farmers and herders was resurging over the first half of 2025, there was disagreement among sources over the nature and categorisation681 of this complex and under-researched phenomenon.682 While some sources attribute the reasons for this conflict to religious differences between the mostly Muslim herders and largely Christian farming communities, and to disputes between herders and farmers over land use,683 others observers linked the clashes to pressures on herders induced by climate change684 and competition over ever-dwindling resources,685 while others labelled the violence as manifestations of organised criminality led by armed groups.686 For more detailed information see EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation, November 2025.

The main perpetrators of violence against Christians are jihadist armed groups,687 including Fulani (jihadist) armed groups,688 which some sources indicated as the main threat to Christians in Nigeria.689 Similarly, ORFA indicated that the main actors responsible for the killing of Christians are Armed Fulani Herdsmen, which are part of the Fulani Ethnic Militia (FEM),'Other Terrorist Groups', an actor the source also refer to 'Fulani bandits' (and allegedly connected to the FEM); as well as Boko Haram,690 including its splinter faction ISWAP.691 The Nigerian government has denied allegations that Christians are deliberately targeted in Nigeria and has deemed such claims as 'misleading'.692 According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, '"Nigeria is battling multiple threats—banditry, terrorism, and organized crime—which cut across religious and ethnic lines … [and it] firmly rejects the portrayal of the situation as an Islamist extermination of Christians."'693

Based on its monitoring, ORFA indicated that, between October 2019 and September 2024, 2.4 Christians were killed in the country for every Muslim, and that in states where attacks against Christians occurred, the rate increases to 5.2.694 According to Nigerian human rights NGO Intersociety, at least 7 087 Christians were killed in Nigeria and 7 800 abducted between 1 January and 10 August 2025. The North-Central Benue State was identified as the hardest hit area (with at least 1 100 deaths), followed by North-Central Plateau State (806 deaths), and Kaduna State in North-West region (620 deaths).695 Such data could not be corroborated by other sources. For more detailed information on security incidents at national and state level (including those affecting Christians within the context of famers and herders' conflict and 'banditry' related violence, see EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation, November 2025).

Some sources stated that violence against Christians, particularly by Fulani armed groups, continue with impunity,696 with the government reportedly failing to effectively protect Christian communities and punish perpetrators.697 According to International Christian Concern (ICC), a US-based Christian organisation that provides advocacy and assistance to persecuted Christians worldwide, although Christian leaders have 'repeatedly' called for the government to provide greater protection and investigate attacks, poor road conditions, the difficulty of the terrain, and 'the lack of rapid response mechanisms, hinder the ability of security agencies to prevent or contain violence against Christians'.698

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