

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: NGA23767
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This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT 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.

Questions

1. Please provide information on the Christian Association of Nigeria.
2. Information on its office holders and its activities.
3. Please provide information on the Yelwa CAN.
4. Information on its office holders and activities.
5. Have there been any reports of the targeting of CAN members / office holders?
6. Is there any record of the killing of the Yelwa Chairman of the CAN (Joshua Ibrahim)?
7. Is there any record of the killing of Ola David, the Secretary of the Yelwa CAN in February 2005?
8. What is the situation for Christians and Ibos in Lagos?
9. Have people from these groups been harmed in Lagos?
10. What is the situation for Christians and Ibos in Anambra State?
11. What is the situation for Christians and Ibos in Plateau State generally?
12. What is the situation for Christians and Ibos in Imo State?
13. Have Nigerian authorities acted to protect Christians from violence?

RESPONSE

1. Please provide information on the Christian Association of Nigeria.

An article in *Compass Direct* dated 17 October 2005 refers to the Christian Association of Nigeria as “the umbrella organization that handles church/state issues in Nigeria” (Minchakpu, Obed 2005, ‘Nigeria: State authorities in Nigeria demolish church in Kano; Officials offer no explanation for destruction of sanctuary in northern state’, *Compass Direct*, 17 October – Attachment 1).

Another article dated 8 August 2005 indicates that the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) “groups the major Christian denominations, including the fast-growing Pentecostal churches” (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2005, ‘Nigeria: Planned census facing boycott threats’, IRINnews.org website, 8 August

http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=48498&SelectRegion=West_Africa&SelectCountry=NIGERIA – Accessed 24 November 2005 – Attachment 2).

A REFINFO article dated 7 February 2002 indicates that the Christian Association of Nigeria, (CAN) “was set up in 1976”. According to the article:

CAN is referred to as a Christian “umbrella group” (*Christianity Today* 7 Feb. 2000; *Worthy News* 2000; *Ecumenical News International* 21 Jan. 1999; Canada 25 April 1996). It comprises, according to the World Council of Churches, “[the CCN,] [Christian Council of Nigeria] the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, two Pentecostal Fellowships, the OAIC-Nigeria Region and TEKAN/EKWA Fellowship (World Council of Churches 9-14 Jan. 1996). According to reports, the CCC [Christian Council of Churches] remained affiliated with CAN as late as June 2001 (*Christianity Today* 11 Jun. 2001).

CAN is actively challenging the introduction of Islamic Law at the national and regional levels (*Christianity Today* 4 Sept. 2000; *ibid.* 7 February 2000). A *Christianity Today* report described CAN as “a leader in the anti-Shari'ah movement” (11 June 2001). *Weekly Trust* reported that, according to a Muslim leader, CAN sought to “destabilize Sharia in Nigeria and counter Islamic religious propagation by portraying the religion as a religion of intolerance and violence.... These incidents... point clearly to calculated and planned strategies to destabilise...” (*Weekly Trust* 7 Dec. 2001). Further, in an article published in the newspaper *Vanguard*, University of Lagos professor and founder of the National Association for Religious and Ethnic Tolerance, C.S. Momoh writes, “... I can say without fear of any contradiction that CAN (Northern zone) and [Jama'atu Nasril Islam, a Muslim umbrella party] are the two main vehicles of religious bigotry and intolerance in Nigeria (23 Sep. 2001) (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2002, NGA38407.E – *Nigeria: The involvement of the Nigerian YMCA in demonstrations or Christian/Muslim conflict in Nigeria and reported deaths of YMCA officials/members after 2000*, 7 February – Attachment 3).

An earlier REFINFO article dated 22 September 2000 includes the following information regarding the Christian Association of Nigeria:

According to an article by Richard Carver posted on UNHCR-CDR WRITENET

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) was established in 1976 as a counterweight to the growth of political Islam and came to prominence in the mid-1980s in the debate over Nigeria's membership of the OIC. This politicization of the religious debate led inevitably to a hardening of the divisions, with for example the leader of one radical Islamic group, Abubakar Gumi of the Izala, proclaiming in 1990 that Muslims would not accept a Christian president (Feb. 1996).

CAN has been described as an “umbrella body” for Christians (AFP 5 July 1995; *Post Express* 1 July 2000). The All Africa News Agency reported on 31 August 1998 that “the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), a movement joined by all denominations, continues to be forthright against injustice and corruption. This has only earned the local church leaders [a] measure of persecution.” On 3 November 1998 the General Board of Global Ministries, the United Methodist Church, stated that CAN includes the United Methodist Church and that CAN “has been monitoring the new government's activities to ensure accountability.” Human Rights Without Frontiers states: “a number of Christian organizations, grouped together in the Christian Association of Nigeria, ... seek to use the political process to achieve moral-political ends” (28 Aug. 2000). CAN's national president

said that politics is God's calling and government is a department of God's Kingdom on Earth. Dr. Mbang added that the task before the church in Nigeria is to develop a strategy to recruit a

new crop of Christians who will appreciate and extol the virtues of honesty and accountability to take the center stage in the administration in the country (*Post Express* 19 Sept. 2000).

The article also provides information regarding the structure, activities and officers of CAN at that time (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2000, *NGA35038.E – Nigeria: Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN); structure, goals, activities, and officers including the names of its Kano chapter organizing committee; whether it has a Kaduna chapter*, 22 September – Attachment 4).

2. Information on its office holders and its activities.

The previously mentioned article dated 8 August 2005 indicates that Peter Akinola is the “president of the Christian Association (CAN) of Nigeria and leader of the Anglican Church” (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2005, ‘Nigeria: Planned census facing boycott threats’, IRINnews.org website, 8 August http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=48498&SelectRegion=West_Africa&SelectCountry=NIGERIA – Accessed 24 November 2005 – Attachment 2).

A *Compass Direct* article dated 29 July 2005 refers to a number of office holders of the Christian Association of Nigeria. These include Saidu Dogo, the “secretary general of the northern chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria”, Reverend S.L.S. Salifu, the “secretary general CAN”, Reverend Yakubu Pam, the “chairman of CAN’s Plateau state chapter”, Reverend A.U. Ubah, the chairman of CAN’s Kano state chapter, Foster Ekeleme, the secretary of CAN’s Kano state chapter, and Reverend Joseph Hayap, the “secretary of the Kadunastate [sic] chapter of CAN” (‘Nigeria: Northern Nigerian leaders implore president to end sharia’ 2005, *Compass Direct*, 29 July – Attachment 5).

A further *Compass Direct* article dated 14 June 2005 mentions that Archbishop Peter Jatau and Elder Saidu Dogo are the “chairman and secretary respectively of the northern Nigeria chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)” (Minchakpu, Obed 2005, ‘Nigeria: Persecution Memo Sent to Nigeria’s Reform Conference – Christian leaders express concern about Islamic institutions’, *Compass Direct*, 14 June – Attachment 6).

An earlier article dated 20 May 2004, which reports an attack by Muslim militiamen on Sabon Gida village, Plateau State, mentions that Pastor Mangmws Tangshak was the “head of the local branch of the Christian Association of Nigeria” at that time (‘Christians flee fresh attacks by Muslim militiamen in Nigerian Plateau State’ 2004, *BBC Monitoring Online*, source: AFP news agency, 20 May – Attachment 7).

An article dated 18 May 2004 refers to a communiqué issued by leaders of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) regarding Nigeria’s President Obasanjo’s criticism of Reverend Yakuba Pam, the chairman of CAN in Plateau state. “The communiqué was signed by the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) state chairman, Bishop Jonas Katung, Secretary of Baptist Conference, Rev. Nathan Nwachukwu, Methodist Bishop of Jos, Rev. J. Jaja and nine other leaders” (Ezulike, Moses & Nwaneri, Felix 2004, ‘Apologise Now, CAN Tells Obasanjo’, *All Africa*, 18 May – Attachment 8).

The above-mentioned articles mention various activities carried out by the Christian Association of Nigeria, including sending “a demand for an end to sharia to President Obasanjo” (‘Nigeria: Northern Nigerian leaders implore president to end sharia’ 2005,

Compass Direct, 29 July – Attachment 5), submitting “a memorandum to the nation’s National Political Reform Conference on June 9, cataloguing cases of persecution and discrimination against Christians” (Minchakpu, Obed 2005, ‘Nigeria: Persecution Memo Sent to Nigeria’s Reform Conference – Christian leaders express concern about Islamic institutions’, *Compass Direct*, 14 June – Attachment 6), and issuing a communiqué by leaders of the Christian Association of Nigeria regarding Nigeria’s President Obasanjo’s criticism of Reverend Yakuba Pam, the chairman of CAN in Plateau state (Ezulike, Moses & Nwaneri, Felix 2004, ‘Apologise Now, CAN Tells Obasanjo’, *All Africa*, 18 May – Attachment 8). Another article dated 18 October 2005 indicates that the Christian Association of Nigeria, along with Jama’atu Nasrul Islam, “a grouping of Muslim organisations,” were “increasingly active in raising HIV awareness among their respective communities and have also met with each other on a number of occasions” (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2005, ‘Nigeria: A lethal dose of shame’, IRINnews.org website, 18 October http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=49620&SelectRegion=West_Africa&SelectCountry=NIGERIA – Accessed 24 November 2005 – Attachment 9).

The previously mentioned REFINFO article dated 22 September 2000 includes information regarding the activities and officers of CAN at that time (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2000, *NGA35038.E – Nigeria: Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN); structure, goals, activities, and officers including the names of its Kano chapter organizing committee; whether it has a Kaduna chapter*, 22 September – Attachment 4).

3. Please provide information on the Yelwa CAN.

4. Information on its office holders and activities.

A search of the sources consulted found no reference to information regarding the Yelwa CAN, its office holders and activities.

5. Have there been any reports of the targeting of CAN members / office holders?

A search of the sources consulted found no reports of the specific targeting of CAN members / office holders.

6. Is there any record of the killing of the Yelwa Chairman of the CAN (Joshua Ibrahim)?

7. Is there any record of the killing of Ola David, the Secretary of the Yelwa CAN in February 2005?

A search of the sources consulted found no record of the killing of the Yelwa Chairman of the CAN (Joshua Ibrahim). There was also no record found of the killing of Ola David, the Secretary of the Yelwa CAN in February 2005.

8. What is the situation for Christians and Ibos in Lagos?

9. Have people from these groups been harmed in Lagos?

No definitive information has been located in the sources consulted that the authorities or a section of society target Christians or Ibos in Lagos for being a Christian or an Ibo. While it is difficult to dissect religion or ethnicity in disputes involving Christians and/or Ibos, particularly in a country like Nigeria with ethnic, religious and regional diversity, no report indicates that they have been harmed purely for their religion or ethnicity in Lagos.

In August 2005, the Lagos-based Civil Liberties Organisation commented that “Ethnic - religious crisis are prevalent in the north and Lagos whereas conflict in the Niger Delta is linked to land tussle and economic whilst that of the east has ethnic coloration.” However, it fails to quote any incident where Christians or Ibos have been harmed in Lagos (Civil Liberties Organisation 2005, *Status of the Implementation of International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in Nigeria: an Alternative Report 67th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*, August <http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/ng092005a.pdf> - Accessed 28 November 2005 - Attachment 10).

Relevant reports dealing with the issues are attached (RRT Country Research Response 2002, *Research Response NGA15546*, 4 November - Attachment 11; RRT Country Research Response 2002, *Research Response NGA15277*, 25 July - Attachment 12; Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2003, *Nigeria: State Protection*, April - Attachment 13).

10. What is the situation for Christians and Ibos in Anambra State?

No information has been located, in the sources consulted, that Christians or Ibos were harmed in Anambra.

US Department of State 2000, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* refers to the violent attack on the minority Muslim Hausas by the majority Igbos [Ibos] in Onitsha, Anambra state (US Department of State 2001, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2000 - Nigeria*, February - Attachment 14). The Catholic Bishop of Awka Diocese, Anambra State in fact warned Christians against making religion an issue in the April 2003 presidential election ('This Day (Nigeria) - AAGM - Presidential Polls - 'Christians Won't Consider Religion', 2003, *Financial Times*, 27 February - Attachment 15).

11. What is the situation for Christians and Ibos in Plateau State generally?

It appears that peace has been restored and maintained in the Plateau State since the inter-religion/ethnic clashes in May 2004 ('P.M. News (Nigeria) - AAGM: Dariye In...Alli Out - Plateau Bids 'Bye to Emergency' 2004, *Financial Times*, 18 November - Attachment 16; 'Nigeria's President Calls for 3 Days of Fasting, Prayer for Peace' 2004, *Voice of America*, 28 May - Attachment 17; 'Nigerian leader declares state of emergency in violence-torn state' 2004, *Associated Press*, 18 May - Attachment 18) although a church-based source indicates that militants involved in the earlier raids have returned in Wase, Plateau state (Marko, Alex 2005, 'Nigeria: Militants target Christians', 24 May <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1413731/posts> - Accessed 28 November 2005 - Attachment 19).

In September 2001, Jos, the state capital was rocked by rioting between Muslims and Christians which left at least 915 dead ('At least 49 killed as nomads attack Nigerian farming community' 2004, *Agence France Presse*, 25 February - Attachment 20; 'Nigeria security forces kill six in ethnic clashes' 2002, *Reuters*, 14 October - Attachment 21). Attached also is a comment by Amnesty International on the series of clashes and reprisal attacks between Christian Tarok farmers and Muslim Fulani cattle herders in the Plateau State (Amnesty International 2004, *Nigeria: Government must protect civilians, investigate and try the perpetrators of the recent killings in Plateau State*, 11 May <http://web.amnesty.org/library/print/ENGAFR440152004> - Accessed 28 May 2005 - Attachment 22).

US DOS comments that:

The suspended state government returned to office when the state of emergency expired in November [2004]. There have been minor incidents of violence in Plateau State since, but not on the scale of the previous reporting period (US Department of State 2005, *International Religious Freedom Report: Nigeria*, November – Attachment 23).

12. What is the situation for Christians and Ibos in Imo State?

No reference has been located of Christians or Ibos being targeted/detained/harassed/arrested in the Imo State, in a search through the sources consulted.

13. Have Nigerian authorities acted to protect Christians from violence?

In a search through the sources consulted, no report has been located that the Nigerian authorities have or have not acted to protect specifically Christians from violence.

In response to the May 2004 clashes in Plateau, President Olusegun Obasanjo ordered the deployment of more police to the area to restore law and order. An additional 600 armed mobile police and military personnel were sent to the area (Amnesty International 2004, *Nigeria: Government must protect civilians, investigate and try the perpetrators of the recent killings in Plateau State*, 11 May <http://web.amnesty.org/library/print/ENGAFR440152004> - Accessed 28 May 2005 - Attachment 22). Previously a Nigerian Catholic archbishop accused the government of failing to protect Christians during the riots ('Nigerian Christians Urged to Fight Back - Nigeria Archbishop Urges Christians to Defend Themselves Against Attacks by Muslims' 2002, AP, 27 November <http://www.papillonsartpalace.com/nigCerian.htm> - Accessed 28 November 2005 - Attachment 24).

US DOS comments that:

No further action was taken, nor is further action likely, in connection with the church and mosque burnings in Kebbi, Kaduna, Ebonyi, and Jigawa States in 2004. No one remained in detention from these incidents, nor is further action likely in relation to the 2003 unrest in Jigawa and Plateau States (US Department of State 2005, *International Religious Freedom Report: Nigeria*, November - Attachment 23).

As a background paper, a recent report entitled "Nigeria: state protection" is attached (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2003, *Nigeria: State Protection*, April http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/ndp/ref/index_e.htm?docid=69&cid=161&version=printable&disclaimer=show – Accessed 25 November 2005 - Attachment 13).

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Copernic search engine

Irinnews.org website www.irinnews.org

BBC News website <http://news.bbc.co.uk>

Amnesty International website www.amnesty.org

Human Rights Watch website www.hrw.org

<u>Databases:</u>		
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Public	<i>FACTIVA</i>	Reuters Business Briefing
DIMIA	<i>BACIS</i>	Country Information
	<i>REFINFO</i>	IRBDC Research Responses (Canada)
RRT	<i>ISYS</i>	RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, U.S. Department of State <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices</i> .
UNHCR	<i>REFWORLD</i>	UNHCR Refugee Information Online
Public	<i>JANE'S</i>	Jane's Intelligence Review
RRT Library	<i>FIRST</i>	RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. Minchakpu, Obed 2005, 'Nigeria: State authorities in Nigeria demolish church in Kano; Officials offer no explanation for destruction of sanctuary in northern state', *Compass Direct*, 17 October. (CISNET Nigeria CX137480)
2. UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2005, 'Nigeria: Planned census facing boycott threats', IRINnews.org website, 8 August.
(http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=48498&SelectRegion=West_Africa&SelectCountry=NIGERIA – Accessed 24 November 2005)
3. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2002, *NGA38407.E – Nigeria: The involvement of the Nigerian YMCA in demonstrations or Christian/Muslim conflict in Nigeria and reported deaths of YMCA officials/members after 2000*, 7 February. (REFINFO)
4. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2000, *NGA35038.E – Nigeria: Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN); structure, goals, activities, and officers including the names of its Kano chapter organizing committee; whether it has a Kaduna chapter*, 22 September. (REFINFO)
5. 'Nigeria: Northern Nigerian leaders implore president to end sharia' 2005, *Compass Direct*, 29 July. (CISNET Nigeria CX130238)
6. Minchakpu, Obed 2005, 'Nigeria: Persecution Memo Sent to Nigeria's Reform Conference – Christian leaders express concern about Islamic institutions', *Compass Direct*, 14 June. (CISNET Nigeria CX123729)
7. 'Christians flee fresh attacks by Muslim militiamen in Nigerian Plateau State' 2004, *BBC Monitoring Online*, source: AFP news agency, 20 May. (CISNET Nigeria CX95254)
8. Ezulike, Moses & Nwaneri, Felix 2004, 'Apologise Now, CAN Tells Obasanjo', *All Africa*, 18 May. (FACTIVA)
9. UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2005, 'Nigeria: A lethal dose of shame', IRINnews.org website, 18 October.
(http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=49620&SelectRegion=West_Africa&SelectCountry=NIGERIA – Accessed 24 November 2005)

10. Civil Liberties Organisation 2005, *Status of the Implementation of International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in Nigeria: an Alternative Report* 67th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, August. (<http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/ng092005a.pdf> - Accessed 28 November 2005)
11. RRT Country Research Response 2002, *Research Response NGA15546*, 4 November.
12. RRT Country Research Response 2002, *Research Response NGA15277*, 25 July.
13. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2003, *Nigeria: State Protection*, April. (http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/ndp/ref/index_e.htm?docid=69&cid=161&version=printable&disclaimer=show - Accessed 25 November 2005)
14. US Department of State 2001, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2000 - Nigeria*, February. (<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/af/700.htm>)
15. 'This Day (Nigeria) - AAGM - Presidential Polls - 'Christians Won't Consider Religion', 2003, *Financial Times*, 27 February. (FACTIVA)
16. 'P.M. News (Nigeria) - AAGM: Dariye In...Alli Out - Plateau Bids 'Bye to Emergency' 2004, *Financial Times*, 18 November. (FACTIVA)
17. 'Nigeria's President Calls for 3 Days of Fasting, Prayer for Peace' 2004, *Voice of America*, 28 May. (FACTIVA)
18. 'Nigerian leader declares state of emergency in violence-torn state' 2004, *Associated Press*, 18 May. (FACTIVA)
19. Marko, Alex 2005, 'Nigeria: Militants target Christians', 24 May. (<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1413731/posts> - Accessed 28 November 2005)
20. 'At least 49 killed as nomads attack Nigerian farming community' 2004, *Agence France Presse*, 25 February. (FACTIVA)
21. 'Nigeria security forces kill six in ethnic clashes' 2002, *Reuters*, 14 October. (FACTIVA)
22. Amnesty International 2004, *Nigeria: Government must protect civilians, investigate and try the perpetrators of the recent killings in Plateau State*, 11 May. (<http://web.amnesty.org/library/print/ENGAFR440152004> - Accessed 28 May 2005)
23. US Department of State 2005, *International Religious Freedom Report: Nigeria*, November. (www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2005/51489.htm - Accessed 9 November 2005)
24. 'Nigerian Christians Urged to Fight Back - Nigeria Archbishop Urges Christians to Defend Themselves Against Attacks by Muslims' 2002, *AP*, 27 November. (<http://www.papillonsartpalace.com/nigCerian.htm> - Accessed 28 November 2005)