

NIGERIA

UNDERSTANDING THE SITUATION

Nigeria is home to one of the largest Christian populations in Africa, but in parts of the country, following Jesus can come at an extraordinary cost. Christians in northern Nigeria and the Middle Belt face ongoing violence from extremist groups and armed militants.

Over the past two decades, more than 50,000 Christians are estimated to have been killed. Churches and Christian villages have been attacked, homes and farmland destroyed, and families forced to flee communities where they have lived for generations. Violence in the north has contributed to the displacement of roughly 3 million people.

The effects continue long after an attack ends. Widows are left without husbands, children without parents, and families without homes or livelihoods. Survivors may carry deep physical and emotional wounds while trying to rebuild their lives in unfamiliar communities.

Yet the Church remains present. Local Christians are caring for survivors, supporting widows, helping displaced families, discipling young people, and choosing to continue following Jesus despite tremendous loss.

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FACTS & CONTEXT

#6 — World Watch List

Nigeria ranks among the most difficult places in the world to follow Jesus, with extremist violence posing an especially serious threat to Christian communities in the north and Middle Belt.

50,000+ Christians Killed

More than 50,000 Christians are estimated to have been killed over the past 20 years as extremist violence has devastated communities across northern and central Nigeria.

3 Million Displaced

Violence in northern Nigeria has contributed to the internal displacement of roughly 3 million people, forcing families from their homes, land, churches, and communities.

Widows Carry a Heavy Burden

When Christian men are killed, their wives may suddenly become the sole providers for their families while also navigating grief, trauma, displacement, and poverty. Local widow groups provide community, spiritual encouragement, and practical support.

Young People Need a Future

Displaced young people can lose access to education, employment, and stable community. ICR partners provide discipleship, vocational training, and practical skills to help young Christians build a more stable future.

Persecution Changes an Entire Family

The impact of violence is rarely limited to one person. When someone is killed, injured, or forced from home, the consequences can affect spouses, children, education, income, housing, and an entire community for years.

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IDRIS'S STORY

Following Jesus at Great Cost

Idris* was born into a prominent Fulani Muslim family and became a Muslim teacher himself. Islam was not simply part of his community—it was deeply connected to his family and identity.

Then Idris encountered Jesus.

He chose to follow Christ and began sharing the gospel with others. That decision came with an immediate and devastating cost. His own family tried to kill him because of his new faith, forcing Idris to flee.

But he did not stop following Jesus.

Years later, while Idris was preaching in a church, he was violently attacked with a machete. The attack left him with severe injuries that continue to affect his speech, balance, and the use of his right hand.

The violence changed his life, but the Church did not leave him to face its consequences alone.

Through an ICR local partner, Idris and his family were relocated to a safer city. They continue to receive help with medicine, education, and other practical needs as they rebuild their lives.

Idris's story shows how persecution can become deeply personal. Following Jesus cost him the acceptance of his family, his safety, and eventually his physical health. Yet his faith remained—and other believers continue to stand beside him.

Name changed for security.

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WHAT THE CHURCH IS DOING

ICR works through trusted local partners who understand the communities, culture, and needs of persecuted Christians in Nigeria.

For widows, this includes small groups led by widows themselves where women can find spiritual encouragement, community, trauma support, and practical care. Rather than facing grief and hardship alone, they are surrounded by other believers who understand what they have endured.

Partners also provide practical relief for families affected by violence and displacement, including food, medical care, housing, education, and other urgent needs.

For young people, the response includes discipleship and vocational training. These programs help displaced youth develop practical skills, build stability, and see that persecution does not have to determine the rest of their lives.

Through it all, the local Church remains at the center—believers caring for believers and helping families rebuild after tremendous loss.

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WAYS TO SUPPORT

SUPPORT WIDOWS

Help provide spiritual encouragement, trauma support, community, and practical care for women who have lost husbands through persecution and violence.

PROVIDE PRACTICAL RELIEF

Help meet urgent needs such as food, medical care, housing, and education for families affected by violence and displacement.

EQUIP THE NEXT GENERATION

Help displaced young people receive discipleship, vocational training, and practical skills that can provide a path toward greater stability.

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PRAYER

Father, we lift up our brothers and sisters in Nigeria. Protect Christian communities facing violence and comfort those who have lost loved ones, homes, and livelihoods. Strengthen widows and families rebuilding after tremendous loss. Give courage to believers like Idris who have paid a great price for following You. Equip the next generation with faith and hope, and strengthen Your Church to remain faithful in the face of persecution. Amen.