



GLOBAL
CHRISTIAN
RELIEF

Inside Nigeria's Hidden Crisis

Why Your Help Matters Now

IN A LAND ON FIRE, THE CHURCH STILL STANDS

I understand how easy it is to scroll past stories of suffering, especially when they feel far away.

But the truth is, the greatest threat to the global Church isn't violence. It's indifference.

That's why we created this guide: to tell the real story behind the headlines and to remind us what's possible when we refuse to stand by.



When I met Tabitha, she was smiling, surrounded by goats, cattle, and the sound of her children's laughter. You'd never guess that just years earlier, she had fled through the night as Boko Haram burned her village.

They killed her husband. They leveled her home. They took nearly everything from her, except her faith.

"I would rather die righteously than die in sin," she told me.

And somehow, in the ashes of all she lost, God rebuilt her life.

Through the love of the global Church, working through Global Christian Relief's local partners, Tabitha received livestock, small business support, and discipleship training. What began as survival has become renewal. Today she's providing for her children, forgiving her enemies, and pointing others to Christ.

Nigeria is one of the hardest places on earth to follow Jesus. According to our 2025 Red List, nearly 10,000 believers have been killed and more than 9,000 abducted in the past two years alone. Yet amid that devastation, the Church is still standing, still worshiping, still forgiving.

Tabitha's faith, and the faith of countless others like her, shows us something the world can't explain. Persecution doesn't destroy the Gospel; it refines it. The fire meant to silence believers has only strengthened their voices.

Scripture reminds us, *"You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household."* (Ephesians 2:19)

We belong to one family, and families show up for one another.

"As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." (Galatians 6:10)

The real atrocity is doing nothing. The real hope is what we do together.

Tabitha is a living reminder of this.

As you read this guide, may you be inspired by the courage of believers like Tabitha and grounded in the truth of what God is doing in Nigeria.

And may your prayers, compassion, and action remind our brothers and sisters there that they are not forgotten and never alone.

Brian Orme

President and CEO, Global Christian Relief

THE CRISIS TODAY: VIOLENCE, DISPLACEMENT & DAILY REALITY

When the gunfire finally stopped, Suzanne could no longer see, but she could still pray.

Moments earlier, Boko Haram fighters had murdered her father in their field. The bullet that stole her sight should have taken her life, too. Instead, she survived and now forgives the men who attacked her.



Her story is not rare.

Across northern Nigeria, the deadliest place in the world to follow Jesus, 9,814 believers have been killed and 9,311 abducted in just two years, according to the Global Christian Relief Red List. Their names rarely make headlines, and neither do their graves.

The pattern repeats across the northeast and Middle Belt regions of the country: gunfire, flight, silence, absence. A father missing. A pastor buried. A child gone.

More than 3.6 million Nigerian Christians now live as strangers in their own country after being driven out by extremist violence. Entire villages empty overnight. Churches collapse in fire. Families flee through the bush with only what they can carry.

For many, there is no clear way home. The farms they once tended are now occupied by those who forced them out. The homes they fled no longer exist. Their communities survive only in memory.

Life in the Camps

Many survivors, including women like Suzanne and Tabitha, end up in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps - crowded, makeshift communities built for those who fled with nothing and cannot safely go back.

Shelters are pieced together from tarps, plastic sheets, and scrap wood, with heat radiating from metal roofs while water, when it comes, flows from a single borehole serving hundreds. Food runs out before the month does, and smoke from cooking fires mixes with dust, disease, and the weight of grief.

Children recite multiplication tables in open-air classrooms built from wood and plastic, determined to learn in defiance of militants who declared "Western education is forbidden." Churches meet beneath trees or between rows of shelters, their hymns rising above the hum of generators and the cries of hungry children.

Women sew clothes from donated fabric to feed their families. Mobile clinics treat malaria, infections, and the wounds of violence - when medicine is available. Youth who have lost siblings and neighbors gather for Scripture study, leadership training, and the simple relief of friendship.

Faith remains present, but weary. Prayers compete with hunger, yet hope flickers where believers gather.

This is where millions of Nigerian Christians now live: between memory and survival, waiting for a future they cannot yet see.

And this is the reality the Church is walking into every day, praying, serving, and rebuilding where the world has looked away.



HOW WE GOT HERE: HISTORY, REGIONS & THE FORCES BEHIND THE VIOLENCE

Before this surge of violence, Nigeria was known for the depth and diversity of its faith communities. Islam has shaped the northern regions for centuries, while Christianity took deep root in the south through missionary efforts, church movements, and rapidly growing congregations in the 20th century.

Today, Nigeria reflects that long history. The south includes one of the world's largest Christian populations (6th globally), while the north includes one of the world's largest Muslim populations (5th globally).

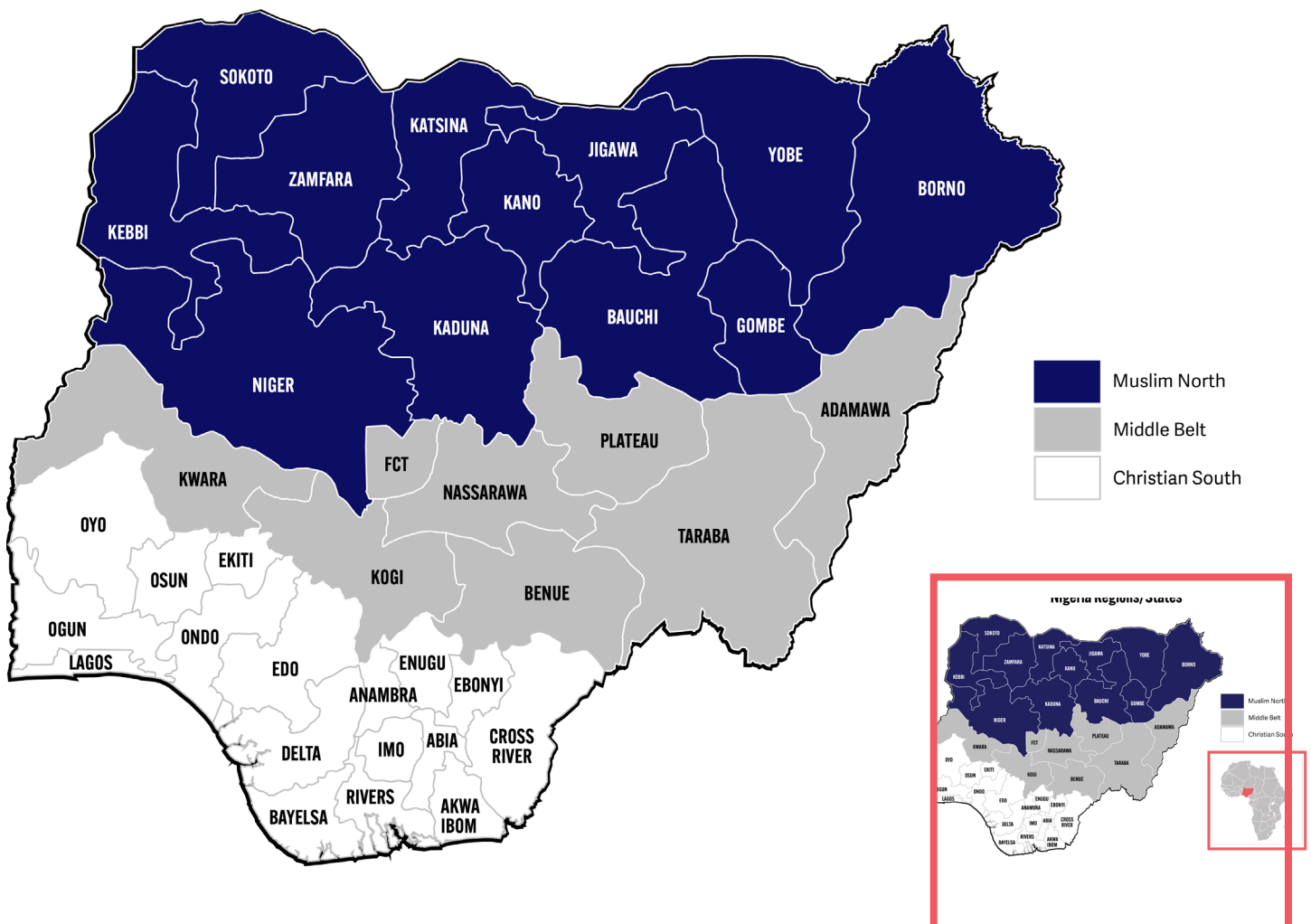
Because religious identity hasn't been counted in national census data for decades, estimates vary. Yet most surveys place the country at roughly half Christian, half Muslim, concentrated largely along regional lines.

The Middle Belt: Where the Lines Meet

Between north and south lies the Middle Belt: states like Kaduna, Plateau, Benue, and Nasarawa. For generations, Christian and Muslim families lived side by side here, sharing schools, markets, and farmland. These communities blended more easily than any other part of the country.

In 1999–2001, 12 northern states expanded Sharia from personal matters into criminal law - creating Islamic courts and legal codes that reshaped daily life in the region. That shift gave long-standing regional differences new social and political weight.

Tensions rose, and within a decade, extremist groups began to exploit those divides, turning once-integrated towns into front lines.



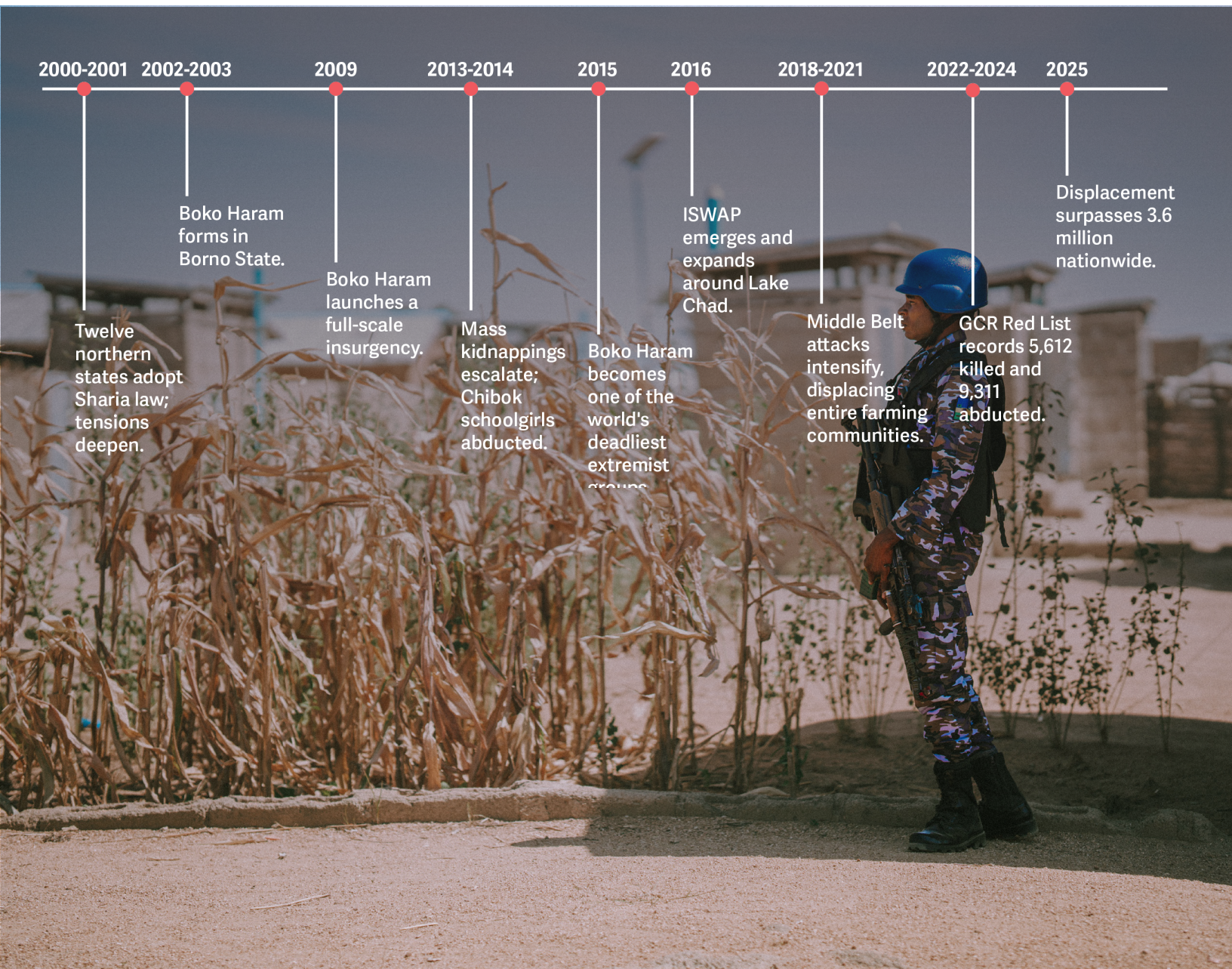
The Armed Groups Driving the Crisis

The violence unfolding today is not random. It is fueled by networks that thrive where governance is weak, and impunity is common.

- **Boko Haram (2009–present)** Began as a radical Islamist movement rejecting Western education. Launched a full insurgency in 2009. Responsible for mass abductions, village raids, church bombings, and systematic targeting of Christians and local Muslims who resist.
- **ISWAP (Islamic State West Africa Province) (2016–present)** Formed when a faction of Boko Haram pledged allegiance to ISIS. Maintains strongholds around Lake Chad. Attacks pastors, aid workers, and Christian villages; funds itself through ransom and extortion.
- **Fulani Armed Groups (Middle Belt)** Non-state militant factions drawn from within the wider Fulani population. Motivated by a mix of resource conflict, land competition, climate pressures, and extremist influence, not representing the Fulani people as a whole. Responsible for widespread destruction of Christian farming communities, land seizures, and mass displacement.

Despite their different origins, these groups share a common outcome: communities emptied, churches destroyed, and Christian families forced to flee.

A Timeline of Escalation (2000–2025)



HOW THE CHURCH IS CARING FOR ITS OWN: MINISTRY IN THE CAMPS AND BEYOND

Even in the hardest places in Nigeria, the Church has never stopped caring for its people. Local Christian partners serve daily in displacement camps, forgotten villages, and communities rebuilding after attack, often at great personal cost. GCR strengthens and equips these partners so they can continue this work faithfully, compassionately, and with dignity.

Walk into any camp and you'll see it: children bent over notebooks in open-air classrooms, women stitching fabric into income, and pastors gathering believers under trees.

Here are some of the ways ministry is happening on the ground.



EDUCATION: A Place to Learn Again

When families flee violence, children often arrive at the camp having lost years of school. With the help of our ministry partner, safe learning spaces are set up where students receive notebooks, uniforms, and lessons that help them regain a sense of normal life. Volunteer teachers offer patient instruction, and older students tutor the younger ones.

In places marked by loss, classrooms become one of the first signs that a future is still possible.

HEALTHCARE: Healing for Body and Spirit

Illness spreads quickly in crowded camps, and many families arrive with untreated injuries. Our partner's mobile clinic travels into camps where mothers haven't seen a doctor in months, providing prenatal care, malaria treatment, and wounds cleaned with gentle hands. The clinic also travels into nearby communities when attacks cut families off from hospitals.

Every visit becomes a reminder: *"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted."* (Psalm 34:18) He has not forgotten.

INCOME GENERATION: Women Rebuilding Their Lives

Many widows and mothers are left as the sole providers for their families. Our partner offers training in sewing, animal husbandry, small farming, and other livelihoods that restore confidence and provide stable income. Women receive starter tools, practical coaching, and ongoing encouragement.

Step by step, families regain the stability that violence tried to take away.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT: Strength for the Next Generation

Young people in the camps walk through grief, uncertainty, and the loss of familiar routines. Through our partner's youth programs, students gather for leadership training, life-skills coaching, tutoring, and Scripture study. Graduation ceremonies mark milestones that once seemed impossible.

In these gatherings, young believers discover purpose, friendship, and hope.

TRAUMA CARE: Walking With the Wounded

Survivors carry wounds that do not show on the surface: nightmares, fear, and memories too heavy to name. Trained counselors from our partner's team hold space for healing through group sessions, prayer, and compassionate listening. Women meet to share their stories; children learn to express grief in safe ways; and pastors receive support as they shepherd others.





WATER & INFRASTRUCTURE: Simple Gifts That Sustain Life

Clean water is scarce in many displacement camps. Through our partner's water projects, wells are repaired, simple systems are built, and families receive safe drinking water close to where they live. Shade structures become gathering places for worship, learning, and rest.

These humble improvements strengthen entire communities.

CHURCH STRENGTHENING: Faith That Holds a Community Together

Even when homes are destroyed, believers gather to worship under trees, tents, or unfinished shelters. Our partner provides Bibles, discipleship materials, and encouragement to those who lead and serve. Prayer meetings continue, and small groups meet at dawn.

In places where darkness tried to silence the Church, worship becomes its brightest witness.

Across Nigeria's camps and communities, faithful believers are caring for one another with steady, Christ-centered love. Through strengthened local partners, this ministry continues quietly, courageously, day after day.

VOICES FROM THE FRONTLINES

Behind every part of this crisis are believers who were supported by Christians serving in their own communities, local partners strengthened and equipped through GCR. These are a few of the stories shared through our partner in Nigeria, showing what courage and steady faith look like in these hard places.



ESTHER: The Teacher Who Returned

"I want them to know God has not forgotten them. If He carried me through, He can carry them too."

Esther still remembers running from her village as militants attacked, smoke rising behind her and schoolbooks pressed against her chest. In the displacement camp, grief made studying difficult. Her father died soon after their arrival, and she wondered if her future had disappeared with him.

It was during this season that our ministry partner in the camp came alongside her. They prayed with her, encouraged her, and helped her stay in school when she wanted to quit. When she finished her studies, Esther returned to the same camp classrooms that once sheltered her, this time as a teacher for children who have lived through the same crisis she endured.

MILKA: The Health Worker Who Came Back to Serve

"When I care for them, I remember how God cared for us."

Milka grew up in the camp after her family fled an attack on their village. She watched nurses and clinic volunteers serve the displaced week after week, treating malaria, infections, and injuries from the violence. Even as a child, she sensed God calling her to help others.

As she got older, one of our partners noticed her interest and helped her begin training as a health worker. Milka completed her program and returned to serve the very community she once fled. Today she works in the mobile clinic, meeting patients with compassion: families shaken after long nights of fear or carrying wounds from the past.

"He brought me through," she says, "and now He lets me help others."





ELIZABETH: A Mother Rebuilding Home and Hope

Elizabeth fled her village with her children when militants struck. They were later captured, and for months she prayed simply for the strength to survive. She carries the grief of losing a child during captivity – something she speaks of softly – but she also remembers the day she escaped, running toward the hope of safety.

In the camp, our ministry partner gently helped her begin again. They supported her through trauma counseling and taught her the tailoring skills she now uses to provide for her family. Today, Elizabeth stitches dresses in bright colors, creating pieces of beauty in a place that has known deep sorrow.

“God rebuilt what I thought was lost,” she says. “Now I can care for my children again.”

PASTOR DANIEL: Faith That Holds a Community Together



(pseudonym used for safety)

“This camp has suffering, but it also has gratitude. We thank God for every mercy. He is with us.”

Pastor Daniel shepherds a small fellowship inside the displacement camp. He has endured loss like many in his congregation, yet he leads with calm confidence rooted in Christ. He reminds believers that Jesus prepared His people for days like these, not to frighten them, but to strengthen them.

As he serves, our ministry partner in the camp provides quiet support: helping with Scripture materials, arranging prayer gatherings, and encouraging him as he encourages others. Under trees and tarps, he meets with families to pray, read Scripture, and trust God together.

These stories are only a glimpse of what believers are facing and how God is sustaining them. Across Nigeria, faith continues to rise in the very places meant to silence it.

FAQ: YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT NIGERIAN PERSECUTION ANSWERED

What does persecution look like in Nigeria today?

Attacks often come without warning. Armed groups raid villages at night, burn homes and churches, and force families to flee with only what they can carry. Many believers lose loved ones, land, and livelihoods in a single night. Others face abduction, violence, or months of displacement.

For millions of Christians, persecution is not a headline. It is the reality that shapes their daily lives.

Who is behind the violence?

Several groups are involved, each with different motives but overlapping tactics.

Boko Haram and ISWAP (Islamic State West Africa Province) are extremist groups that openly target Christians, churches, and schools.

In the Middle Belt, organized armed militias attack farming communities, often selecting villages based on their Christian identity.

Political tensions, land pressures, and weak security all play a role, but the pattern of attacks against Christian communities is unmistakable.

Is this conflict really about religion?

Violence in Nigeria is complex. Land disputes, poverty, and weak security all contribute to instability.

But survivors across Nigeria consistently describe a clear pattern: attackers identifying Christians by name, burning churches, demanding conversion, and targeting pastors and Christian families.

In many of the stories shared through our partners (women like Tabitha, children like Esther, and mothers like Elizabeth), the attackers' motives were spoken openly at the moment of the assault. Families were targeted because of their Christian identity, and churches were singled out long before homes were taken.

The crisis has many layers, but for those living through it, faith is often a defining reason they were targeted.

Why can't displaced Christians return home?

Many villages remain unsafe. Some have been attacked more than once, and families fear returning only to be forced out again. Homes and farms have been destroyed, and armed groups still move through the region.

Without reliable security or the means to rebuild, most displaced Christians simply have nowhere safe to go and no way to resume the life they once knew.

What happens to the church in displacement camps?

When congregations lose their buildings, they don't lose their faith. In many camps, believers gather under trees, in courtyards, or in makeshift shelters. Pastors shepherd scattered congregations with worn Bibles and steady hearts. Children learn Scripture in open-air classes, and families sing together at night.

Worship looks different now, but it has not disappeared.

How does support from the global Church help?

Prayer, encouragement, and tangible support allow local Christian partners to meet urgent needs, from healthcare and clean water to trauma care, school supplies, and spiritual support.

These acts of compassion help families take their next step with strength and remind suffering believers they are not forgotten.

HOW YOU CAN STAND WITH NIGERIA'S CHURCH

You've seen what believers in Nigeria are facing and how faithfully they continue to trust Christ in the fire. You've also seen how the Church is caring for its own: teaching children in tents, praying with widows, rebuilding communities, and offering healing where there has been deep loss.

Here's how you can walk with them:

PRAY

The needs in Nigeria are deep, but your prayers can meet believers right where they're suffering.

- Pray for believers showing uncommon faith in the face of violence and pressure to deny Christ.
- Ask God to comfort families who have lost loved ones, homes, and entire communities.
- Pray for survivors carrying hidden wounds, especially women and children recovering from captivity, trauma, and abuse.
- Ask the Lord to restore lost dreams for youth who missed years of school and still long for a future.
- Pray for separated families to be reunited, especially those scattered during attacks or displacement.
- Ask Jesus to help persecuted believers forgive in places where bitterness feels easier than hope.
- Pray for protection over churches and camps in Borno, Plateau, Kaduna, Benue, and other hard-hit regions.
- Ask God to provide for camps lacking basic needs such as clean water, clinics, safe classrooms, and stable food.
- Pray for pastors shepherding scattered congregations with few resources and heavy burdens.
- Ask the God of hope to renew joy and endurance in communities where discouragement runs deep.



SHARE

Most Christians have never heard these stories.

Share this guide with your small group or church. Post a story that moved you.

Your voice helps shine light where the world has gone quiet.

To stay connected and to have new stories you can share, follow Global Christian Relief through email and social media. Each week you'll receive real stories of courage, prayer needs from the field, and ways the global Church is standing together.

PARTNER

One of the most powerful ways you can support persecuted believers is by becoming a Frontline Partner: joining a community of Christians who stand with suffering believers every month.

Your monthly partnership of any amount strengthens local Nigerian Christian partners serving in the very places you've read about, bringing:

- mobile medical care for families cut off from clinics
- safe classrooms and school supplies for displaced children
- income-generating projects for widows starting over
- discipleship resources, Bibles, and pastoral encouragement
- clean water to camps with none
- trauma healing for women and youth

There are still camps without water, without clinics, without youth programs, and without vocational opportunities – places where hope feels far away.

Your monthly partnership helps reach them with steady, Christ-centered love.

Become a Frontline Partner today so persecuted believers never have to stand alone.

Learn more about how you can get more involved in helping persecuted believers in Nigeria through our Frontline Partner program.

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”
(Galatians 6:10)



PO Box 27001
Santa Ana, CA 92799 USA

To contact Global Christian Relief by phone,
call 888-524-2535

GCRelief.org