



## *Committee on International Justice and Peace*

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3160  
WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/JPHD • FAX 202-541-3339

October 1, 2012

Honorable Hillary Clinton  
Secretary of State  
2201 C. Street  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

In the wake of the bombing of St. John's Catholic Church in Bauchi, Nigeria on Sunday, September 23, 2012, our Conference urges the United States to intensify its work with Nigeria to re-establish security and the rule of law in ways that involve both the government and civil society, especially religious organizations.

The suicide attack killed three and wounded scores of others. The toll could have been much worse had the Church not taken security precautions following the bombing of a church in Bauchi last June. Beyond the loss of life and limb, the attack deepened the wounds of Nigerian society.

Archbishop Ignatius Ayau Kaigama, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria stated, "This latest attack is really shocking.... But we must go on with our lives and our work, and not be intimidated by violence...."

I visited Nigeria last month and spoke with Archbishop Kaigama about the recurrent violence. He noted that terrorism threatens economic life by scaring away investment. It also affects the practice of faith when people are afraid to attend church services or to send their children for religious instruction.

Archbishop John Onaiyekan of Abuja spoke at a recent conference on international religious freedom cosponsored by Catholic Relief Services, The Catholic University of America (CUA), and our Bishops' Conference at CUA on September 12, 2012. The Archbishop said the rise of Boko Haram and the use of terrorist tactics represent an alarming break from the traditional character of Nigerian society. He argued for a closer look at the root causes of Boko Haram that can be found in political, social and economic weaknesses in Nigerian society that include corruption, societal disaffection and the manipulation of religion by some political elites.

The attacks also highlight differences among Nigerians on the role of religion in a democratic state. The Government of Nigeria cannot constitutionally create a "state" religion, but this provision has not been respected in ways that allow all Nigerians to follow their religious beliefs. The people of Nigeria must struggle to define a new national identity that is inclusive of the country's rich religious diversity.

Letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

October 1, 2012

Page 2

The Catholic Church continues to urge its people to practice restraint and resist the temptation to retaliate, and has created forums for dialogue between Muslims and Christians that need to be strengthened. Muslim and Christian leaders of good will require support to build bridges across their faith communities to prevent future violence.

Despite recent reports of actions by the Nigerian security forces, much remains to be done. The United States should strengthen its work with the Nigerian government to promote security while ensuring that the police and security services operate within the confines of the rule of law and protect citizens' rights

We also urge our nation to acknowledge the vital role that faith communities must play in building peace. We recommend support for civil society, and especially for Muslim and Christian faith communities, in mobilizing people of good will.

Our Conference of Bishops and Catholic Relief Services are fully committed to assisting the Catholic Church in Nigeria and welcome the opportunity to engage with State Department and USAID to help Nigerians bring peace and security to their country.

Sincerely yours,

+ 

Most Reverend Richard E. Pates  
Bishop of Des Moines  
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace