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US Officials Tell Congress Violence Against Nigerian Christians Has Not Stopped a Year After CPC Designation

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"Unfortunately the violence has not stopped,"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

United States officials told Congress on Thursday 12 November 2026 that violence against Christians in Nigeria has not stopped, one year after the country was placed back on America's religious-freedom watchlist. "Unfortunately the violence has not stopped," said Frank Garcia, Assistant Secretary of State for African affairs, testifying before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa. The State Department, he said, is treating the issue as a priority and working with Nigerian authorities to hold attackers to account.

The hearing, chaired by Representative Chris Smith, was a review of Nigeria one year after its renewed designation as a "country of particular concern" - known as CPC - for religious freedom. It was a sober session. A year of diplomacy, pressure and promises had passed, and the officials sent to report on progress had to tell Congress the plain truth: the killing has not stopped, the kidnappings have not stopped, and the Christians of Nigeria's Middle Belt are no safer than they were.

The CPC designation was renewed in November 2025 under President Donald Trump, who also threatened military action over the treatment of Christians in Nigeria. Nigeria's goverment rejected the designation, saying it was based on misinformation and faulty data. A year later, that disagreement has not been resolved - but the hearing was not about the label. It was about whether anything on the ground has actually changed.

On that question, the testimony was blunt. Riley Barnes, a State Department official for democracy, human rights and labour, told the subcommittee that Nigeria has hired police, deployed forest guards, and increased prosecutions and arrests. But those steps, she said, "had not led to greater safety for Christians in the country's Middle Belt region." The machinery of the state is moving. The violence is moving faster.

"There are still rising death tolls and kidnappings. So, I think we have this posture of trust but verify," Barnes said. It is the language of a government that wants to believe its partner - and no longer can. Trust, but verify. Cooperate, but count the bodies. That single sentence may be the most honest summary of a year of American policy toward Nigeria: engagement without illusion.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

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