

Press Release

Contact: Emmanuel Ogebe or Sam Casey

Phone: (703) 894-4092

sbcasey@advocatesinternational.org

eiogebe@advocatesinternational.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

5 P.M EST, April 1, 2010

Advocates International Joins Nigerian Christian Lawyers in Decrying the Ongoing Sectarian Killing and Violence against Defenseless Christian Women and Children in Nigeria and Calls for Support for the Victims and Justice for the Perpetrators

CLASFON, the Christian Lawyers Fellowship of Nigeria, joins with Advocates International to form an on-going project -THE JUSTICE FOR JOS PROJECT – to provide humanitarian and legal assistance to the survivors of the unprovoked attacks and monitoring of the criminal investigations and prosecutions to assure justice is provided for these horrible crimes.

“His victims were sleeping when he arrived, he said, and he set their house on fire. Sure enough, they ran out. “I killed three people,” Mr. Adamu said calmly. He and the other detainees showed no sign that they had been maltreated; some confessed to killings, and others denied them, speaking in front of the police. The police quickly arrested about 200 people in connection with the killings, and many of them were crouching anxiously in rows on a bare concrete floor, outside the police headquarters on Wednesday morning. The police have confiscated 14 machetes, 26 bows, arrows, 3 axes, 4 spears and 44 guns. Victims, many of them women and children, were cut down with knives, short and long; few survived.” - New York Times

WASHINGTON, DC — On March 7, 2010 residents of three communities in the idyllic mountain range city of Jos in Plateau State of Nigeria barely had a chance to be awakened from slumber before they were mercilessly butchered in a brutally executed massacre executed by Muslim Fulani tribesmen. By daybreak a mass burial was conducted for the hundreds of Christian women and children (estimated at about 500) slain in Jos - fondly called "Jesus Our Savior" for the strong Christian heritage and missionary presence in the frontlines of Nigeria's Muslim/Christian divide.

Following up on its statements of sorrow and concern at that time, Advocates International (AI), along with the Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP), whose member organizations based in 18 countries are working on religious liberty issues around the world, made strong statements today on the killings and violence in Nigeria and launched a global campaign calling for justice and prayer for that nation.

The Statement—formally known as the [CYRUS STATEMENT ON THE CRISES IN NORTHERN NIGERIA](#) because it was released following the RLP's meeting in Larnaka, Cyprus last week -- acknowledges some positive elements within Nigeria, including the role that the church is playing, but expresses deep concern about the ways in which the situation is being handled by the government. In addition, the Statement calls on the worldwide church to pray for the restoration of the religious liberties of all Nigerians, the provision of needed humanitarian support, and for the institution of much-needed reconciliation efforts. *"Following the recent appalling massacres of Christian men, women and children in villages around Jos, Nigeria it was timely that our partners focus on Nigeria,"* stated Mervyn Thomas, CEO of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, UK and Chairman of the Religious Liberty Partnership.

"Together as the RLP, we stand in support of Christians in Nigeria, calling upon the Church worldwide to pray for a restoration of lasting peace in Nigeria," said Andy Dipper, CEO of Release International. *"Christians in central and northern Nigeria today face unprecedented persecution, with women and children suffering barbaric acts of violence. In this context the Nigerian Church leadership is actively choosing to isolate those perpetrators of these recent killings by not retaliating, and relying on God to sustain them in their grief."*

Advocates International's General Counsel, Samuel B. Casey, one of the co-drafters of the Cyprus Statement, said *"the perpetrators of this violence must to be brought to justice. If these people continue to kill with impunity, the violence will escalate even further, and will eventually endanger the entire nation. Therefore, in partnership with CLASFON, the Christian Lawyers Fellowship of Nigeria, we are announcing today the formation of our JUSTICE FOR JOS PROJECT.* Al's special counsel for this project, Emmanuel Ogebe, a Nigerian lawyer who was born in Jos, said: *"In the past decade in which we have lost thousands of lives in religious violence, this is the first time we actually have perpetrators in captivity who have admitted to the crime. In my two decades as a lawyer I have never seen anyone prosecuted and convicted for killing in the name of religion."*

Al sees a unique opportunity to provide a justice monitoring program that will track the trial of Mr. Adamu and others like him who calmly plotted the savage killings and raised resources to do it. Past suspects have slipped through the legal system creating a culture of impunity and incentives for more killers.

The JUSTICE FOR JOS PROJECT will:

- Provide immediate help for displaced families and survivors as well as create early warning alert systems in the communities.
- Work with local businesses and missionaries to create economic empowerment projects to engage Christian and Muslim youth in gainful employment that will keep them out of trouble and build bridges of commonality
- Monitor the performance of the legal system to ensure all perpetrators are brought to justice.

This Easter, you can be a part of ministry to the persecuted church in very real and practical ways. Just this week 12 more Christian women and children were murdered in their homes in Jos - a strong indication that more terror cells are on the loose in addition to the ones in detention. This underscores the importance of prosecuting the suspects and identifying other conspirators now at large. Says Mr. Ogebe, "We fear that this is a new strategy - sleeper attacks in the dead of the night. Christians are in the majority in Jos so if there is a direct daylight clash, they are more likely to successfully defend themselves. People who are sleeping don't stand a chance."

Advocates International is an international organization of attorneys in over 150 nations who seek to do justice with compassion, including through its Task Forces on the Rule of Law And Religious Freedom, dedicated to upholding rule of law and protecting the rights to free expression, religious belief and free exercise and association throughout the world for all people.

The Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP) is a collaborative effort of Christian organizations around the world focused on religious liberty. A listing of RLP members is set forth at the end of the Cyprus Statement. For more information about the Religious Liberty Partnership or the Cyprus Statement, please contact Brian O'Connell: E-mail: Brian@REACTServices.com; Phone: +1-425-218-4718

---End---