

Intervention presented at the 5<sup>th</sup> UN Forum on Minority Issues, Geneva, and 27-28<sup>th</sup> Nov 2012

**Agenda Item 5: Challenges and Problems encountered in practical implementation of the declaration.**

Thank you Madam Chair.

My name is Josephine Adaza Ako from Nigeria , working with Search for Common Grounds (SFCG), an organization working with Religious minorities in northern Nigeria.

Madam Chair,

Plateau, Bauchi and Kaduna states are currently the main site of religious violence in northern Nigeria. The violence has mainly been along religious lines, between Muslims and Christians. The past decade has seen recurrent violent clashes across the states, in urban and rural areas, where thousands of lives have been lost in these conflicts. There has also been extensive damage to property, with the result that the developmental prospects of the states have been set back.

Madam Chair,

This sectarian violence has allowed religious hostilities and social discrimination against religious minorities to go unchecked. Over time, violence between the conflicting parties has intensified through attacks on their sources of livelihood, as well as places of worship. This has led to the *U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedoms*, declaring Nigeria as a "tragic" example of one of the world's worst violators of religious freedoms, in its 2010 annual report<sup>1</sup>.

Madam Chair,

The Nigeria government has done little in addressing the real issues which form the core of this conflict. The government has not endeavoured to research the situation or consult the affected peoples in looking for a suitable situation. Instead the government employs the use of the military to intervene during the conflict and bring it to a halt. However, this only provides a temporary, short term solution, not long lasting peace in the region; because once the military leaves the area, the conflict resumes.

In conclusion therefore, Madam Chair, we request this Forum to adopt recommendation 27 and urge the Government of Nigeria to heed the provisions of Draft recommendation 27 towards seeking peaceful means of resolving the conflict than the one presently in use. We agree that the state should conduct research in consultation with minority groups to assess the situation of religious minorities, and seek their input on measures to ensure their rights; But not the use of the military which will further aggravate the situation.

THANK YOU

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.uscirf.gov/reports-and-briefs/annual-report/3310.html>