

PERSECUTION^{ORG}
INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN

Secretary of State Antony Blinken
Harry S Truman Building 2201 C Street Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20037

November 2021

Dear Mr. Blinken,

We write asking you to consider implementing targeted sanctions against Nasir El-Rufai, the governor of Kaduna State, Nigeria. Now two years from the end of his second term, El-Rufai has repeatedly issued orders that expose and endanger Christian communities by locking villagers in their homes just prior to militant attacks. International Christian Concern has tracked at least six such incidents under El-Rufai's leadership. Militants killed hundreds of villagers in these incidents.

Relatively new to democracy, Nigeria goes to great effort to cast itself as a beleaguered nation struggling valiantly against sectarian violence. Secular democracy, the narrative goes, is the guiding principle governing Nigeria—any deviation from that is the fault of malicious nonstate actors intent on spoiling what they cannot control. Nigeria does suffer from malicious actors, but the idea that the government is an impartial player doing its best to promote justice and freedom for all is simply wrong.

On December 24, 2016, Fulani militants attacked the village of Goska in Kaduna. Eighty houses were burned, dozens were wounded, and fourteen villagers died, including women and children. The attack garnered international attention because it happened while Goska was rendered helpless by Kaduna State Governor Nasir El Rufai who, just five days prior, had imposed a strict 24-hour curfew on Jema'a Local Government Area where Goska is located.

The lockdown was enacted in response to protests of the El Rufai administration's lackluster response to violence in Jema'a. The last quarter of 2016 saw [102 people killed, 215 injured, and an estimated 50,000 houses burned](#) across 25 Christian communities in Jema'a, a jurisdiction smaller than Houston. The Goska lockdown was only enforced against villagers, who [reported](#) that Fulani communities were observed moving about freely in the days leading up to the attack.

Despite international condemnation of the lockdown in Jema'a, El Rufai has imposed at least six lockdowns since the 2016 attack. In a pattern now all too familiar, villagers protest the lack of security provided by the El Rufai administration, El Rufai responds to protesting communities by locking them down, and they are attacked by militants.

Though there is no evidence to suggest that El Rufai is directly behind these attacks, his continued use of lockdowns in the face of hundreds of deaths is likely in violation of international human rights law.

International Christian Concern has engaged with the U.S. Departments of State and Treasury to suggest a visa ban and sanctions on El Rufai for his continued use of lockdowns on Christian communities in Kaduna. We would ask that you review the available evidence on El-Rufai and publicly sanction him for his actions.

Sincerely,

The undersigned: