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10 March 2009

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Nigeria: Situation of Jehovah's witnesses; whether they are victims of violence; state protection available to them
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Chapter IV, Section 38 (1) of the *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria* states the following in regards to freedom of religion:

Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance. (1999)

According to the United States (US) Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report for 2007*, in Nigeria, though there were "isolated cases of societal abuse" toward Jehovah's Witnesses who did not participate in local "age grade associations," members were largely accepted in their communities and were free to practise their religion (14 Sept. 2007). The US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008* likewise states that in Nigeria there were "a few instances of societal abuse and discrimination" against Jehovah's Witnesses who did not participate in local associations for religious reasons (25 Feb. 2009, Sec. 2c). In the *International Religious Freedom Report for 2008* there is no mention of abuses or discrimination against Jehovah's Witnesses in Nigeria (18 Sept. 2008). Further information on violence against Jehovah's Witnesses or on state protection available to them could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Nigeria. 1999. *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*. <<http://nigeria.gov.ng/NR/rdonlyres/D38CF776-EE00-48DF-A09D-C06FE29997DA/0/NigerianConstitution.pdf>> [Accessed 6 Mar. 2009]

United States (US). 25 February 2009. "Nigeria." *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008*. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/af/119018.htm>> [Accessed 5 Mar. 2009]

_____. 18 September 2008. "Nigeria." *International Religious Freedom Report for 2008*. <<http://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108385.htm>> [Accessed 5 Mar. 2009]

_____. 14 September 2007. "Nigeria." *International Religious Freedom Report for 2007*. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90114.htm>> [Accessed 5 Mar. 2009]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral Sources: A Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute in Washington, DC who specializes in religion in Nigeria did not provide information within the time constraints of this Response. A representative at the Office of Public Information of Jehovah's Witnesses in New York, NY did not provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet sites, including: African Press Agency (APA), AllAfrica, Amnesty International (AI), Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Factiva, Freedom House, The Hudson Institute, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Minority Rights Group International (MRG), *Nigerian Tribune* [Ibadan], The Norwegian Council for Africa, Norwegian Refugee Council, The Office of Public Information of Jehovah's Witnesses, *This Day* [Lagos], United Kingdom (UK) Border Agency, United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council, UN Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), UN Relief Web, *Vanguard* [Lagos].

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