

# Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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## Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website.

19 November 2012

### NGA104212.E

Nigeria: Social attitudes toward religious intermarriage; treatment of intermarried couples and their children by society and the authorities; protection and services available to intermarried couples  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Information on religious intermarriage in Nigeria was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, in the editorial published on 25 January 2012, *The Hindu*, an English-language Indian newspaper, indicates that religious intermarriages are common in Nigeria. *Independent Catholic News* (INC), a news website on "subjects of interest to Catholics and the wider Christian community" (7 Dec. 2005), indicates in an article posted by the National Director of Missio/PMS [Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS Nigeria n.d.)] in Nigeria that "interreligious marriages and harmony are more pronounced" in southern Nigeria (INC 25 July 2012).

In correspondence sent to the Research Directorate on 17 October 2012, a senior research fellow at the Institute of African Studies of the University of Nigeria provided the information contained in the following two paragraphs.

Response to interreligious marriage in Nigeria varies among its different ethno-religious groups. The Hausa-Fulani [predominant ethnic groups in northern Nigeria (PBS 5 Apr. 2007; MRG n.d.)] leadership views any act of conversion to Christianity as "treasonable," and those who convert face ostracism by their communities and cease to receive the protection of their state governments. The Hausa-Fulani discourages Muslim women from marrying Christians. However, marriage between a Christian woman and a Muslim man is "encouraged" due to the "pattern of family succession, according to which the religion of the father is also the religion of the children and their mother." Also, "educated" women are challenging the "rigidity" of the marriage policy adopted by the Hausa-Fulani, which has led to persecution of those who challenge the traditional practice.

In Yorubaland, religion is more attached to social vocation than politics. Muslims, for example, adopt certain Western and Christian practices in their ceremonies. Interreligious marriage is common and lacks the religion-based conflicts experienced with the Hausa-Fulani. Among the Yoruba, "it is not uncommon to see a multi-religious family living in harmony." After a marriage has taken place, with either Christian, Muslim, or customary rites, a couple seeks a marriage under common law, for two purposes: to provide effective protection to the woman and to avoid forcing one partner to attend the other's religious rites. Among the Yorubas, interreligious marriages are mostly between a Christian female and a Muslim male, with the Christian female retaining her religion. On rare occasions, marriages between a Muslim female and a Christian male occur, and in most of these cases the woman converts to Christianity.

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

*The Hindu*. 25 January 2012. "Nigeria Under Siege." <<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/article2829135.ece>> [Accessed 26 Oct. 2012]

*Independent Catholic News* (ICN) [London]. 25 July 2012. Rev. Fr. George Ajana. "Nigeria Missio Report on Boko Haram Insurgence, State of Security." <<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=20872>> [Accessed 26 Oct. 2012]

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Minority Rights Group International (MRG). N.d. "Nigeria Overview." <<http://www.minorityrights.org/5757/nigeria/nigeria-overview.html>> [Accessed 31 October 2012]

Pontifical Mission Societies, PMS Nigeria (PMS Nigeria). N.d. "About PMS." <<http://www.pmsng.org/aboutus.html>> [Accessed 15 Nov. 2012]

Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). 5 April 2007. "Ethnicity in Nigeria." <[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth\\_coverage/africa/nigeria/ethnic.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth_coverage/africa/nigeria/ethnic.html)> [Accessed 31 Oct. 2012]

Senior Research Fellow, Institute of African Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. 17 October 2012. Correspondence with the Research Directorate.

## Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Attempts to contact professors at the following universities were unsuccessful: King's College London; University of Birmingham – Centre of West African Studies; University of Edinburgh – School of Divinity; University of Florida – Center for African Studies. Attempts to contact representatives at BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights were unsuccessful.

Professors at the following universities could not provide information: University of Oxford – African Studies Centre.

**Internet sites, including:** Africa for Women's Rights; African Journals Online; Amnesty International; Asylum Aid; Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation; Center for Reproductive Rights; *Christian Science Monitor*; Council on Foreign Relations; Denmark – Danish Immigration Service; [ecoi.net](http://ecoi.net); Encyclopedia of the Third World; Freedom House; GERDES-AFRICA; Islam Sharia Watchmen; *The Guardian*; Nigeria – Federal Capital Territory, Ministry of Interior, Police Force; *Nigerian Tribune*; Norway – Landinfo; *The Punch*; Saint; United Kingdom – British Council, Border Agency; United Nations – Integrated Regional Information Networks, Refworld, Reliefweb; United States – Central Intelligence Agency, Department of State, Overseas Security Advisory Council; University of Wincosin; *Vanguard*.

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