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Faith-Based Civil Society Organizations and the Protection of Victims of Human Rights Abuses in Nigeria

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Research Panel: Faith-Based Perspectives

Presenter: Nathaniel Umukoro, Delta State University, Nigeria

Title: Faith-Based Civil Society Organizations and the Protection of Victims of Human Rights Abuses in Nigeria

Abstract:

Nigeria has witnessed various forms of human rights violations such as extrajudicial killings, rape, and torture during both military and civilian regimes. Amnesty International, the U.S. State Department, and the Political Terror Scale of the Centre for Systemic Peace indicate that Nigeria is a country characterized by generalized human rights violations.

Over the years, several scholars have examined the causes, nature, responses of the state, and reasons for the persistence of human rights violations in Nigeria. A careful consideration of these studies indicates that the role of faith-based civil society organizations in the protection of victims of human rights abuses has not been holistically examined. Consequently, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the views of faith-based civil society organizations in Nigeria on human rights and the protection of victims of human rights violations?
- Do religious extremism and violent activities create a disposition of indifference on the responses of faith-based civil society organizations to the protection of victims of human rights violations in conflict-affected areas of Nigeria?
- What strategies do faith-based civil society organizations in Nigeria use in the protection of victims of human rights abuses in conflict-affected areas of Nigeria?

These questions were answered with the aid of primary data collected through observation, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions with participants from faith-based organizations such as Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Interfaith Mediation Centre. Secondary data were also sourced from magazines, newspaper reports, and websites.

The study shows that faith-based civil society organizations in Nigeria view the protection of victims of human rights violations in conflict-affected areas of Nigeria as an activity that should be carried out without religious bias. Additionally, religious extremism and violent activities have not created a disposition of indifference on the responses of faith-based civil society organizations to the protection of victims of human rights violations in conflict-affected areas of Nigeria.

About the presenter:

Nathaniel Umukoro holds a PhD in peace and conflict studies (2015) from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. His dissertation focused on human rights violations and violent conflicts in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria during military and civilian regimes. During his doctoral studies, he was a fellow of the Next Generation Social Sciences in Africa program of the Social Science Research Council, New York. He is also an alumnus of Brown International Advanced Research Institute, Brown University, and George Eckert Institute, Germany. He has published more than 30 journal articles and chapters in books. He specializes in politics of human rights and peace and conflict studies with regional focus on Africa. He is a senior lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria.