



AMERICAN PRINCIPLES PROJECT

April 22, 2020

The Honorable William P. Barr
Attorney General of the United States
United States Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Barr:

The American Principles Project writes to express our objection to the decision taken by your Department of Justice to agree to repatriate \$320 million in stolen funds to Nigeria, and to encourage you to ensure these funds are not repatriated until human rights, religious liberties, and due process have significantly improved. APP was founded to advance the fundamental American principle of human dignity in all actions. The situation in Nigeria is a total abdication of these values, and more importantly, American values.

Recently, the United States Government concluded that under the direction of President Muhammadu Buhari and his administration, Nigeria has become a “severe violator of religious freedom.” The evidence to support this conclusion is overwhelming.

Amnesty International, Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART), the International Committee on Nigeria, and the International Organization for Peace Building and Social Justice have documented that since President Buhari came into power in 2015, more than 12,000 Nigerians have been murdered, of which more than half have been singled out because of their Christian faith.

It is not just the persecution of Christians that APP finds deeply troubling. The 2019 Human Rights report by the State Department found systematic human rights and due process violations at the hands of Nigeria’s top law enforcement officer, Attorney General Abubakar Malami and his second in command, Ibrahim Magu, chair of the much feared Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), finding they and the organizations they oversee were responsible for *[s]ignificant human rights issues includ[ing] unlawful and arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, torture, and arbitrary detention, all the above by both government and nonstate actors; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions...*

Concern with Nigeria’s behavior under the Buhari Administration is growing. Recently, U.S. Senator Grassley has written to the DOJ noting that, “[u]nder President Muhammadu Buhari’s government, Nigerians face violations undermining freedom of religion, freedom of speech, due

process, and the rule of law. The persecution of Christians is especially alarming, as attacks have increased rapidly.”

Similar concerns were also shared with you by Representatives Steve Chabot and Chris Smith.

On behalf of APP, it would be helpful if you could share with us:

1. Whether the DOJ has repatriated these monies to Nigeria, and if not, when does it plan to do so?
2. Whether DOJ intends to address the questions raised by the Members of Congress?

Attorney General Barr – APP would also strongly encourage the DOJ to undertake an investigation on whether or not the EFCC’s role in detaining individuals who have spoken against the Buhari administration warrants the consideration of sanctions against EFCC Chairman Magu and Attorney General Malami under the Global Magnitsky Act or the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act.

The U.S Government must use all the tools and enforcement mechanisms at our disposal to ensure corrupt perpetrators of crimes against freedom of religion and against humanity are held to account. Any repatriation of assets by the U.S. DOJ to Nigeria at a time when the country’s leadership is engaged in blatant disregard for human rights, and has ignored and possibly enabled the murder of thousands of Christians, is not acceptable.

The United States must help stop the abuse and persecution of millions of innocent Christians and people of faith who continue to be at severe risk of intimidation and other torments inflicted upon them by their own government.

Sincerely,



Terry Schilling
Executive Director
American Principles Project
309-230-3909

CC:

The Honorable Michael Pence, Vice President, United States of America
The Honorable Mike Pompeo, Secretary, U.S. Department of State
The Honorable Ambassador Tibor Nagy, Jr., Assistant U.S. Secretary of State for the Bureau of African Affairs
The Honorable Ambassador Sam Brownback, Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom