

UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

P. O. Box 96014
Brixton 2019
Johannesburg
South Africa
Tel: +27 10 215 0374
Cell: +27 83 650 0115



10, 7th Avenue
Edenvale 1609
Johannesburg
South Africa

E-mail: gensec@uccsa.co.za
Website: uccsadenomination.org.za

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Contact: United Congregational Church of Southern Africa

Email: media@uccsa.co.za / gensec@uccsa.co.za

Phone: +27 836500115

United Congregational Church of Southern Africa A Call to Peace, Responsibility, and Moral Discernment Amidst Recent Military Action in Nigeria

In light of the recent U.S. missile strikes against ISIS-linked targets in northwest Nigeria on Christmas Day, the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) offers a prayerful and carefully considered response. We recognize the responsibility of governments to protect human life and to confront armed groups that inflict terror and suffering upon innocent communities. At the same time, we believe that moments such as these demand moral discernment rooted in faith, conscience, and concern for the long-term well being of affected societies.

At Christmas, the Church proclaims a single, coherent message drawn from Scripture. In Isaiah 9:6, the coming of the child is announced as the advent of a new kind of governance one marked by wisdom, justice, and peace. In Luke 2:10–14, that promise is fulfilled as good news for all people, accompanied by the angelic declaration of peace on earth. Together, these texts affirm a central Christian conviction: that God's response to violence and fear is not the multiplication of force, but the transformation of conditions that give rise to conflict, through justice, compassion, and the preservation of human dignity.

Read within the context of Nigeria a nation that has endured prolonged insecurity, displacement, and communal trauma this biblical witness speaks with particular urgency. It calls all who exercise power to recognize that peace cannot be imposed through military means alone. While force may offer short-term containment, it too often deepens cycles of violence, undermines social cohesion, and contributes to long-term instability. Communities are displaced, essential services disrupted, and already fragile regions rendered increasingly difficult to govern, with the heaviest burden borne by ordinary civilians.

It is from this Christian understanding that the UCCSA addresses all parties involved in the present conflict. To extremist groups that target civilians, we affirm without qualification that such violence is a profound violation of human life and dignity and must be rejected unequivocally. To governments engaged in counter-terrorism efforts, we acknowledge the duty to protect populations, while urging that this responsibility be exercised with restraint, foresight, and an unwavering commitment to the protection of civilians and the pursuit of lasting peace.

We therefore respectfully call upon the governments of the United States and Nigeria to ensure that military measures do not become the defining or dominant response to insecurity. We urge sustained investment in diplomatic engagement, regional cooperation, community-based peace building, and social and economic interventions that address the root causes of violence and radicalization. These paths, though demanding patience and courage, offer a more credible foundation for peace than reliance on force alone.

As followers of Christ, the Prince of Peace, we affirm that every act of violence whether perpetrated by non-state actors or undertaken by states carries profound moral consequences. As we enter a new year, we call upon all leaders and stakeholders to act with wisdom, humility, and moral responsibility in the pursuit of security, justice, and the common good.

The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa stands in solidarity with all who have suffered as a result of violence in Nigeria and beyond. We pray for the healing of wounded communities, the restoration of trust, and a renewed commitment locally and globally to peace rooted in justice, compassion, and respect for human life. May the message proclaimed at Christmas continue to guide our collective efforts toward a more just and peaceful world.

In Christ's love,

For more information, please contact the UCCSA office or visit our website at [www.uccsadenomination.org.za].

Signed by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. M. M.', written over a horizontal line.

UCCSA President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. S. S.', written over a horizontal line.

UCCSA General Secretary