



## Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing

### Witness Biographies

### Conflict and Killings in Nigeria's Middle Belt

#### Panel I



**Ambassador Sam Brownback** is the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom. He served as Governor of Kansas from 2011 to 2018. Previously he served as a U.S. Senator (1996-2011) and a U.S. Representative in the House of Representatives (1995-1996) from Kansas. While a member of the Senate, he worked actively on the issue of religious freedom in multiple countries and was a key sponsor of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. He also served as Kansas Secretary of Agriculture (1986-1993) and was a White House Fellow in the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (1990-1991).



**Ambassador Morse Tan** is the Ambassador-at-Large for Global Criminal Justice. Ambassador Tan was serving as the youngest full Professor of Law at Northern Illinois University College of Law, where his areas of expertise included international criminal law, international human rights law, and constitutional law. Ambassador Tan served as a Visiting Scholar at both the University of Texas Law School and Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law. Ambassador Tan was a Founding Professor of the first American *juris doctor* program in Asia at Handong International Law School in South Korea.



**Robert Destro** serves as the Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL). A human rights advocate and civil rights attorney with expertise in elections, employment, and constitutional law, Destro served on the faculty at Catholic University's Columbus School of Law since 1982 and served as its interim dean from 1999 to 2001. He was founding director of the Interdisciplinary Program in Law and Religion and served as the Director of the Institute for Policy Research and Catholic

Studies from June 2017 to September 2019.

## **Panel II**



**Nina Shea** is the Director of the Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom. She is expert in international religious freedom issues, including how it pertains to US foreign policy, religious minorities, women's rights, terrorism, anti-Semitism and free speech. Ms. Shea has worked as a non-profit lawyer specifically focusing on issues concerning religious freedom and freedom of expression in American foreign policy for over thirty years. She joined Hudson Institute as a Senior Fellow in 2006, and there she directs the Center for Religious Freedom, an entity she founded in 1986.



**Annigje Johanna Buwalda** is the Executive Director of Jubilee Campaign USA, focusing on international religious freedom, advocating for the release of prisoners of conscience and resettlement of refugees, combatting trafficking for the protection of children, and providing support to victims. In March 1996 Ann Buwalda founded the law firm, Just Law International PC, a firm handling all aspects of immigration law including asylum and refugee cases. She has served as adjunct professor teaching Immigration Law at Regent University in 1996 and teaching International Religious Freedom Law in 2011.



**William Amove Avenya**, a Bishop of Gboko, Nigeria, was ordained priest on 30<sup>th</sup> May, 1981; appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Makurdi diocese 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2008; appointed first Bishop of Gboko diocese on 29<sup>th</sup> December, 2012 and installed on 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2013. Born on 21<sup>st</sup> June, 1955 in Benue State, Central Nigeria, Bishop Avenya attended Mt. St. Gabriel Secondary School, Makurdi, Benue State and St. Augustine's Major Seminary, Jos, Plateau State, both in Central Nigeria. He also attended Manchester University, England, where he did his doctorate in Education – 1989.



**Jane Adolphe** is an international human rights lawyer who has published, taught, and practiced in this area of law for over twenty years. As a Professor at Ave Maria School of Law from 2001 to the present, Adolphe served as an internal expert to the Holy See (2011 to 2020), working in Vatican City State, where Adolphe practiced in the area of international human rights (e.g., rights of the family, women, children and those subjected to torture and racial discrimination). In 2020, Adolphe organized a conference on the persecution and genocide of Christians in Sub-Saharan Africa, with an emphasis on Nigeria. The meeting gathered together international religious freedom experts, scholars, government officials, and Nigerian locals.



**Baroness (Caroline) Cox** served as deputy speaker of the House of Lords from 1985 to 2005. She was Founder Chancellor of Bournemouth University; Chancellor of Liverpool Hope University from 2006-2013 and is an Hon. Vice President of the Royal College of Nursing. She is Founder and CEO of HART [Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust]. Her humanitarian work takes her to conflict and post-conflict zones, including the Armenian enclave of Nagorno Karabakh, Sudan, South Sudan, Nigeria, Uganda, Syria, the Shan and Chin regions of Burma. She has visited North Korea to promote Parliamentary initiatives and medical programmes.



**Udo Jude Ilo** is the Nigerian representative for the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA). Mr. Ilo supports civic education and media campaigns on political participation, human rights, natural resources management and freedom of information. By building partnerships with local and regional groups that promote inclusive, democratic governance, transparency and accountability, and active citizenship, Mr. Ilo helps advocate for a robust civil society that holds political institutions accountable. Before joining OSIWA Udo worked as a Country Manager for the Forum of Federations- a network for promoting federal practices across the globe with presence in six continents. In the last 17 years, Mr. Ilo has worked as a change agent- engaging government on issues related to elections, human rights and good governance and working with citizens to promote knowledge and enhance their capacity to demand reforms.



**Mike Jobbins** is Vice President of Global Affairs and Partnerships at Search for Common Ground, an international conflict transformation organization supporting 120 peacebuilding efforts throughout Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North America. For the past 12 years, he has developed and managed crisis response, conflict resolution and inclusive governance programs, including in Nigeria and the Sahel. Prior to joining Search for Common Ground, Mr. Jobbins supported training programs for high-level political leaders and policy research at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and spent time in Sudan with Mercy Corps. Originally from New Jersey, Mr. Jobbins holds a master's degree from Georgetown University and a bachelor's degree from Harvard University. He is fluent in English and French.