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Senate

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will now report.

The senior assistant executive clerk read the nomination of Matthew E. Orso, of North Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of North Carolina.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MULLIN). The Senator from Iowa.

NIGERIA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, if you watch television, you are hearing a lot of reports from Nigeria about kidnappings and murders, other reports of violence, and particularly you are hearing it about Christians in Nigeria.

This violence has grown more frequent and more troubling as time goes on. The enforcement of blasphemy laws by the Nigerian Government coupled with the rise of violent attacks by terrorists against religious communities represents a serious infringement upon the freedom of religion that you are supposed to have in that country.

Blasphemy laws are enforced in 12 Nigerian states and also at the Federal level. That enforcement is resulting in the prosecution and imprisonment of Christians, Muslims, traditional practitioners, and even humanists. Furthermore, violence by terrorists like Boko Haram and the other organization called the Islamic State West Africa Province continues to pose serious security challenges.

Unfortunately, these challenges are not new developments. For years, we have been hearing from our own government Agencies, particularly the FBI and the Department of Justice, urging our own State Department to designate the terrorist group Boko Haram as a foreign terrorist organization, a step that was delayed until 2013.

For my part, I have consistently sought information and action to address this ongoing threat. Going way back almost 10 years in 2016, I sent a letter to then-U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch requesting information regarding the yearslong process of designating the Nigerian Islamist group Boko Haram as a foreign terrorist organization.

In 2020, I wrote to then-Secretary Pompeo and Ambassador Sam Brownback asking what steps were being taken to protect Christians in Nigeria and whether a Special Envoy might be appointed.

At that time, the Department assured me that they were actively addressing the issue at multiple levels with the Nigerian Government, but now, years later, we continue to see concerning reports about violence and religious prosecution in Nigeria.

That is why I was so very happy to see our own President Trump take long-awaited action in designating Nigeria a country of particular concern. That designation puts Nigeria on a watch list, puts Nigeria on notice that if they don't take care of this situation, other things can intervene.

The Nigerian Government must take immediate action to end this violence, and the United States should do all it can to support and encourage those efforts. Once again, I am proud to see President Trump on television, at his news conferences and things like that, speaking up for the Nigerian Government to take action and supporting the plight of Christians in Nigeria.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God our shield, the giver of victory and honor, shine on us with Your kindness that brings a rich harvest of joy. Today, guide our lawmakers with Your Spirit. Complete the work You have begun in them and lead them by the power of Your prevailing providence. May they trust You completely, permitting You to remove obstacles from the road ahead.

Lord, train them in Your school of humility so they will walk safely without stumbling. Help them to remember that all efforts to defend themselves will fail without Your grace and mercy. Inspire them to seek Your will in all they do.

We pray in Your magnificent Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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