



CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE OF NIGERIA


Plot 459, Cadastral Zone B2,
Southern Parkway, Durumi 1,
Abuja.

+234(0)818 807 9892


catholicsecretariatng@gmail.com
catholicsecretariatofnigeria@csn.ng
www.cbcn.org
P. O. Box 6523 Garki, Abuja, Nigeria

On the Closure of Schools in Northern Nigeria during Ramadan A Statement by the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) (Monday March 3, 2025)

1. We, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), express deep concern over the recent declaration by some governors in northern Nigeria to close schools for five weeks during the Ramadan period. This decision, which affects not only Muslim students but also Christian students and Christian-owned schools, raises serious questions about the secular nature of our country and the rights of all citizens.
2. As stated in Section 10 of the Nigerian Constitution, "The Government of the Federation or of a State shall not adopt any religion as State Religion." This provision underscores the secular nature of our country and guarantees the freedom of all citizens to practise their faith without hindrance.
3. As we emphasised in our pastoral letter, "The Church and the Nigerian State" (2012), "The Nigerian state is secular, and this secularity is not a mere declaration; it is a fundamental principle that must guide all aspects of our national life."
4. Furthermore, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 13) emphasise the right to education as a fundamental human right. The closure of schools for an extended period undermines this right and jeopardises the education and future of millions of Nigerian children.
5. We are particularly concerned about the impact of this decision on the already alarming rate of out-of-school children in northern Nigeria. According to UNESCO, Nigeria has the highest number of out-of-school children in the world, with over 10 million children not attending school. This decision will only exacerbate this crisis and undermine efforts to improve education outcomes in the region.
6. We urge the governors of the affected states to reconsider this decision and explore alternative arrangements that respect the rights and freedoms of all citizens. We also call on the Federal Government to intervene and ensure that the rights of all Nigerians, regardless of their faith or background, are protected.
7. We pray that our leaders will prioritise the education and well-being of all Nigerian children, regardless of their faith or background, and work towards creating a more just and equitable society for all.


+Lucius Iwejuru Ugorji
Archbishop of Owerri
President, CBCN




Most Rev. Donatus A. Ogun, OSA
Bishop of Uromi
Secretary, CBCN