

*****NEWS RELEASE*****

For Immediate Release
May 12, 2023

CONTACTS:

Hamilton Strategies, Media@HamiltonStrategies.com, Beth Harrison, 610.584.1096, ext. 105, or Deborah Hamilton, ext. 102

One Year After the Brutal Stoning Death of Deborah Emmanuel, Justice has Not Been Served

We Remember; Save the Persecuted Christians Encourages a Month of Action for Justice for Deborah and Others

WASHINGTON — One year ago today, May 12, 2022, Deborah Emmanuel a 22-year-old college student in Sokoto, Nigeria was stoned to death by her fellow classmates and her body burned while a jubilant crowd celebrated her murder.

Deborah, a Christian student, [was murdered](#) by incensed Muslim students following a heated debate in a WhatsApp chat group intended for academic purposes which had become a tool for Islamic apologists. She became a target for violence when she attempted to steer the conversation back to the group's study for exams for which another student accused her of blasphemy. By the next morning, a mob had formed and Deborah was hunted down and killed.

Five Nigerian department of state security (DSS) agents attempted to protect Deborah and her cousin as they were hidden in a guard shack for several hours. Eventually, the crowd overcame the agents and captured Deborah. Her cousin, at first thought by the attackers to be Deborah, was beaten but survived and is now in hiding.

It has been reported by credible witnesses that approximately 50 armed Sokoto police officers stood by and, other than releasing a small amount of tear gas, did nothing to disperse the crowd.

Two arrests were made, but the suspects were never charged and were released. But, a year later, another Christian, [Rhoda Jatau](#), a health care worker from Bauchi state who made a social media post condemning the violence, is still sitting in jail without bail on charges of blasphemy. She was arrested on May 20, 2022. The U.S. Commission on International Freedom (USCIRF) has [called for her release](#).

Sokoto and Bauchi are among 12 of 36 Nigerian states that imposes Sharia law and courts on its citizens.

“Due to inaccurate reporting at the time of her murder, Deborah Emmanuel is also known as Deborah Yakubu, or Deborah Samuel,” explained Dede Laugesen, executive director of Save the

Persecuted Christians (STPC). “Some believe her name may have been intentionally falsely reported by authorities or the media in Nigeria and elsewhere in order to conceal her Christian name. Nonetheless her name, as confirmed by family, is Deborah Emmanuel and we will not forget her.”

In an effort to keep Deborah’s memory alive and to continue to demand freedom for Rhoda Jatau, ***Save the Persecuted Christians***, in collaboration with other organizations involved in the International Religious Freedom Roundtable Africa Working Group, has produced **an [online toolkit with tips and suggestions on how ordinary citizens can help tell her story](#)**. Concerned advocates are encouraged to tag Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari and to use the hashtag #JusticeForDeborah.

Save the Persecuted Christians also remembers the religious prisoner of conscience (RPOC) [Leah Sharibu](#), who will mark her 20th birthday on Sunday, May 14, Mother’s Day in the United States.

At 14-years-old, Leah was taken from her school by Islamist terrorists on February 19, 2018, and is being held as a “slave for life” for refusing to renounce her faith in Jesus. In September 2022, an escaped captive confirmed Leah has been given in marriage to a commander of Isis West Africa Province (ISWAP), the dominant splinter group of Boko Haram, and has given birth to two children.

Advocates for Leah are encouraged to post to social media a two-minute selfie video or other post on May 14 using the hashtag, #FreeLeah.

“Leah Sharibu’s incredible faith in the face of terror must not be forgotten. The Nigerian Body of Christ will not be made whole until Leah comes home to her family. Please keep Leah in your daily prayers,” said Laugesen.

###