

COI QUERY

Country of Origin	NIGERIA
Title	Idol Worshipping in Anambra, Delta, Edo, and Enugu states, including prevalence and whether roles are inherited, incidents of forced participation in rituals, consequences for refusal to join, including treatment of Christians; availability of state protection
Reference period	January 2021 to 15 September 2023
Topic(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Prevalence and inheritance of roles of Idol Worshipping in Anambra, Delta, Edo, and Enugu states2. Incidents of forced participation in rituals and consequences for refusal to join3. Treatment of Christians in the context of idol worshipping4. State protection for Christians in the context of idol worshipping
Date of completion	19 September 2023
Query Code	Q40-2023
Contributing EU+ COI units (if applicable)	N/A

Disclaimer

This response to a COI query has been elaborated according to the [EUAA COI Report Methodology](#) and [EUAA Writing and Referencing Guide](#).

Query responses are produced in response to COI information requests received from asylum authorities within EU+ countries or initiated by EUAA based on COI information needs. Query responses are produced within a limited time period, typically within 5 to 10 days. Within these time constraints, the information provided in this response has been researched, evaluated and processed with utmost care.

All sources used are referenced and cited in the bibliography section. A quality review has been performed in line with the above mentioned COI methodology. This document does not claim to be exhaustive or conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

The information in the response does not necessarily reflect the opinion of EUAA and makes no political statement whatsoever. The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision-making authorities. Any event taking place after the reference period is not included in this query response.

COI QUERY RESPONSE – Nigeria

Idol Worshipping in Anambra, Delta, Edo, and Enugu states, including prevalence and whether roles are inherited, incidents of forced participation in rituals, consequences for refusal to join, including treatment of Christians; availability of state protection

1. Prevalence and inheritance of roles of Idol Worshipping in Anambra, Delta, Edo, and Enugu states

Information on idol worship in Anambra, Delta, Edo, and Enugu states was scarce among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query. However, the following information may be relevant.

In 2019, the Secretary to State Government (SSG) of Anambra ‘expressed concern over a steady increase in idol worship in many parts of Nigeria, including the South East.’¹

Syncretism was reported to be common in Nigeria, merging aspects of Islam or Christianity with traditional practices.² In the report published in March 2019, titled ‘Oath Taking in Edo: Usages and Misappropriations of the Native Justice System’, the author³ indicates that Christians in Edo State resorted to ‘native justice’ noting that indigenous worshippers, when searching for help, would vary the deities they appealed.⁴

Without providing further details, Nigerian newspapers reported in 2022 public statements by the State Governor of Anambra, alleging that ‘idolatry is the fastest-growing religion in the state’ especially among youth.⁵ He reportedly made further statements urging the church and ‘all denominations to unite in one body in Christ Jesus’ and ‘fight the common criminals’ in reference to ‘occultic powers’.⁶

¹ Sun (The), Anambra SSG decries escalation of idol worship in South East, 22 May 2019, [url](#)

² USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom – Nigeria, 15 May 2023, [url](#), p. 5

³ The author of the publication is Ms Precious Diagboya, who holds a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. She has worked as researcher on Migration from Nigeria to Europe, North Africa and other parts of the Gulf of Guinea for the French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA-Nigeria) and the Swiss-Sub Saharan Africa Migration Network (S-SAM), University of Neuchatel.

⁴ Diagboya, P., Oath Taking in Edo: Usages and Misappropriations of the Native Justice System, IFRA-NIGERIA Working Papers Series No. 74, 2 March 2019, [url](#), p. 14

⁵ Tribune Online, Soludo charges Church to confront Idolatry in Anambra, 5 December 2022, [url](#); Punch, Idol worship fast growing in Anambra, says Soludo, 6 December 2022, [url](#)

⁶ Punch, Idol worship fast growing in Anambra, says Soludo, 6 December 2022, [url](#); Pulse NG, Soludo urges churches to fight idolatry, says idol worship is fast growing in Anambra, 6 December 2022, [url](#)

2. Incidents of forced participation in rituals and consequences for refusal to join

Information on incidents of forced participation in rituals and consequences for refusal to join could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints to complete the query.

3. Treatment of Christians in the context of idol worshipping

Information on treatment of Christians in the context of idol worshipping was scarce among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints. However, the following information may be relevant.

Nigerian media sources reported in 2019 the decision by a traditional ruler in Delta state of replacing an idolatry statue, referred to as the Nneoma or Nnem-omai statue, with a Christian symbol, namely a statue of Jesus Christ.⁷ The sources consulted by Delta Post in relation to this episode expressed their concern about the consequences that such action against 'the gods' could bring to the community.⁸

A 2019 article on the Nigerian news website NaijaGists.com reported on an incident in Urora, Edo State, in which traditional community leaders and chief priests ordered Christian church services to stop by 8am. One pastor refused to do so and continued his service but was attacked and beaten by a group of youths described by the source as 'idol worshippers'.⁹

4. State protection for Christians in the context of idol worshipping

Information on state protection for Christians in the context of idol worshipping could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints to complete the query.

⁷ Daily Post, Delta chiefs scream sacrilege after monarch replaced ancient idol, shrines with Jesus' status in palace, 23 January 2019, [url](#); Punch, In my kingdom, the king and first son cannot sleep under same roof – Ezeibunem I, Obi of Nsukwa, 9 February 2019, [url](#)

⁸ Daily Post, Delta chiefs scream sacrilege after monarch replaced ancient idol, shrines with Jesus' status in palace, 23 January 2019, [url](#)

⁹ NaijaGists.com, Idol Worshippers Beat Pastor to Stupor For Refusing to End Sunday Church Service at 8am, 30 September 2019, [url](#)

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Daily Post, Delta chiefs scream sacrilege after monarch replaced ancient idol, shrines with Jesus' status in palace, 23 January 2019, <https://dailypost.ng/2019/01/23/delta-chiefs-scream-sacrilege-monarch-replaced-ancient-idol-shrines-jesus-status-palace/>, accessed 18 September 2023

Diagboya, P., Oath Taking in Edo: Usages and Misappropriations of the Native Justice System, IFRA-NIGERIA Working Papers Series No. 74, 2 March 2019, accessible at: <https://hal.science/hal-03313372/document>, accessed 15 September 2023

NaijaGists.com, Idol Worshippers Beat Pastor to Stupor For Refusing to End Sunday Church Service at 8am, 30 September 2019, <https://naijagists.com/idol-worshippers-beat-pastor-urora-edo-state/>, accessed 15 September 2023

Pulse NG, Soludo urges churches to fight idolatry, says idol worship is fast growing in Anambra, 6 December 2022, <https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/soludo-says-idol-worship-is-fast-growing-in-anambra/t07vfmq>, accessed 15 September 2023

Punch, Idol worship fast growing in Anambra, says Soludo, 6 December 2022, <https://punchng.com/idol-worship-fast-growing-in-anambra-says-soludo/>, accessed 15 September 2023

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Sun (The), Anambra SSG decries escalation of idol worship in South East, 22 May 2019, <https://sunnewsonline.com/anambra-ssg-decries-escalation-of-idol-worship-in-south-east/>, accessed 15 September 2023

Tribune Online, Soludo charges Church to confront Idolatry in Anambra, 5 December 2022 <https://tribuneonline.ng/soludo-charges-church-to-confront-idolatry-in-anambra/>, accessed 15 September 2023

USDOS (US Department of State), 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom – Nigeria, 15 May 2023, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/441219-NIGERIA-2022-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf>, accessed 19 September



ADDITIONAL SOURCES CONSULTED

All Africa; Amnesty International (AI); Anambra Broadcasting Service (ABS); Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED); British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC); BVI Channel 1; Christian Association of Nigeria; Council on Foreign Relations (CFR); Deutsche Welle (DW); Ecol.net; Edo World; European Union – EUAA COI Portal; Human Rights Watch (HRW); Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB); Independent (The); ITV; National Light; New Humanitarian (The); Nigerian Observer; US Department of States (USDOS); Voice of America (VOA) Africa.