

## KILLINGS: LET THE TRUTH BE TOLD

The Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), under the leadership of its President-General and Sultan of Sokoto, His Eminence, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, CFR, mni, is deeply saddened and devastated by the orgy of violence and mindless killings being perpetrated across the country.

As a matter of fact, looking at the situation of insecurity in Nigeria today and judging it with the incessant killings of innocent people in their scores for whatever reason, the latest incident of mass murder in some villages in Plateau State can only be described as terrible, wicked, evil, disastrous, devilish and calamitous.

The truth is that similar incidents have occurred in other States like Taraba, Benue, Nasarawa and Zamfara in recent times. Nigeria can definitely not continue like this. These killings must be stopped!

Finding the initial gory incident (also claimed to be another senseless reprisal) and the attacks that followed regrettably disturbing, the office of the Governor of Plateau State issued a strongly-worded press statement in which the Governor condemned the protest that trailed the unfortunate incident of violent attacks in the Northern Senatorial District of the State.

According to the release, the Governor, His Excellency, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong, blamed the violence resulting from the protest on some religious groups under the auspices of the Christian Association of Nigeria, Northern Zone of Plateau State, the State Wing of Christian Association of Nigeria and Bazata Gospel Team. He then vowed to bring the masterminds of the violent protest to book.

While joining the Governor in condemning the incessant heinous mayhem (initial or reactional), the Council hereby suggests to the Federal Government to bring security to the rural level across the country and re-strategise the security structure of the country.

### Let the Truth be Told

Contrary to the impression being created by those who are paid to misinform the public, in some of the cases, Muslims were the targeted victims of the killings generally presented as herdsmen killing. It is the maturity of the Council that does not allow us to make the situation worse by using emotive language based on the level of violence wreaked on Muslims.

There is abundant evidence of many Muslims who were slaughtered, particularly those who were stopped on the blocked highway, identified as Muslims and gruesomely killed by the same elements that are quick to blame their crime on others. The truth is that the same cannibals who waylaid Muslims on Sallah day few years ago, roasted and ate them (the video of which went viral and is available) are still active in their systematic campaign of terror in the Middle Belt. It is also instructive that the Christian Association of Nigeria, Bauchi State Chapter, has described the disturbing situation Nigerians are witnessing in its true light. According to the Chairman, Reverend Joshua Ray Miller, the attacks are the handiwork of saboteurs and a grand conspiracy to make Nigeria ungovernable, hence make the Buhari Administration appear unpopular as the 2019 general elections approach.

The Chairman said, "It is unfortunate that some people are hiding under the disguise of local Fulani herdsmen to perpetrate these killings and from what we are witnessing, they are heading towards the realms of power at the Federal level." He refuted the allegation of Fulani herdsmen killing Nigerians stressing that "some politicians who are hungry to seize power at the national level were sponsoring criminals to perpetrate heinous crimes in the Northern part of the country."

That is the low level of desperation and infamy to which some political and religious leaders have descended because of vanity. At this point, it is pertinent to call on Nigerians to heed to the warning given by no other person than the General Superintendent of the Deeper Life Bible Church, Pastor William Folorunso Kumuyi that we should "be vigilant, wary of those who kill for political reasons to resurrect religious war."

### Religious Drivers of Murder

The same script of murderous rage is being written by the trio of Chief Solomon Asemota, Prof. Joseph Otubu and Rev. Bosun Emmanuel who are hiding under the mask of the National Christian Elders Forum to set the country ablaze with dangerous distortions, spurious claims and outright lies. Their strategy is to stir the emotions of the unwary majority and appeal to the primordial sentiments of their religious followers.

Many people can recollect the passionate falsehoods and concocted videos produced, mass circulated and presented by Bosun Emmanuel to several churches just to incite Christians and thwart the electoral victory of President Muhammadu Buhari in 2014. Among what he said then was that General Sani Abacha was the best President Nigeria ever had. His reason for reaching that conclusion was simply that General Abacha deposed a Sultan.

Having failed in his mission to divide Nigerians across religious lines preparatory to the 2015 elections, he has sought fellow Islamophobes and ethnic bigots to drive the same cause he failed woefully at. The mission is evil and the method is despicable: set Nigerians against one another by circulating hate messages.

As some religious leaders hoodwink their audience that they are speaking on behalf of God, the extent to which these elements have poisoned the hearts of gullible Nigerians is hard to imagine. We therefore urge the Federal Government to take security seriously and be proactive by preventing anarchists, whether in religious or political garbs, from exacerbating our woes through their new-found industry of fake news, hate speech and violent language.

In the same vein, those who sit in Ibadan and Lagos issuing press releases on issues that they are too lazy to investigate should be more circumspect. As all that glitters is not gold, not all what is read in the media is true. As revelations by international media organisations have shown that most images and videos gleefully shared on social media to depict current happenings in Nigeria are either old or sourced from foreign countries, responsible and educated people are not supposed to play to the gallery. That is why the Glorious Qu'ran enjoins verification of news: "O you who believe! If a fasiq (liar, evil person) comes to you with any news, verify it, lest you should harm people in ignorance, and afterwards you become regretful of what you have done." (Q 18:16)

### The Need for Security

The Federal and State governments should accord the security of lives and property of Nigerians its deserved seriousness. Of the factors that give any government the legitimacy with which to govern effectively, security is foremost. In fact, it is the first responsibility of government.

It is obvious that any situation that fails to guarantee the security of life and property will surely allow for mutual distrust and unsurmountable problems of violence and reprisals that can never augur well for peaceful co-existence.

There is too much bloodshed in the country and it is the responsibility of Government at all levels to stop it.

Our Sympathy and Appeal

The NSCIA sympathises, as usual, with the government and people of Plateau State as well as the families of other innocent Nigerians caught up and killed in that glee of madness. The Council also urges all Nigerians to desist from resorting to violence as a means of achieving their objectives. They should always think of the implications and consequences of violence, mutual suspicion, hate speech and unwarranted rivalry. Rwanda was not a movie; it was real.

Nigerians should always remember that no one, no matter how powerful and connected he assumes himself to be, can accurately predict the end of war. Those who fan the embers of discord and war, waylay Muslims and kill them should be wary of the consequences of their actions. The media should also be cautious and crosscheck their facts. Sacking unprofessional reporters who would have been well paid by their sponsors and apologising to Nigerians for reports that had induced readers to commit murder are like medicine after death.

As citizens of the same country, we cannot depend on lamentations, expression of condolences and sympathy as the basis of our prayers to God for the stoppage of unnecessary carnage unleashed by some of our countrymen, both state and non-state actors, against others. The action required of us is vigilance, truth, fairness and introspection, instead of being pawns in the hands of political interests who masquerade as religious and ethnic champions but do not mind the cost in human lives for achieving their selfish ends. "...Verily, Allah does not change the condition of a nation until such a nation changes its style of living..." (Qur'an 13:11).

For peace, progress and development to be achieved, all hands must be on deck to accompany prayers with positive and purposeful actions.

God save Nigeria from Nigerians.

Signed

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Deputy Secretary-General