

**In Search of Salutary Responses to the Existential Threats Against Middle Belt Autochthonous Communities in Nigeria**

**By**

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## PREAMBLE

Middle Belt autochthonous communities are the peoples and ethnic nationalities indigenous to the region, who have been settled in their territories for so long that the lands they occupy bear their names. Most of these communities have been in the general area occupied by them for thousands of years, like the peoples in the Nok Culture Area covering most of Southern Kaduna, Plateau, Nasarawa, Southern Kebbi and Niger States, who have been in their area for over 4000 years, long before the desiccation of the Sahara forced the Afro-Asiatic (Hausa etc) and Chadic (Kanuri, Kanembu etc) language speakers to the present Sahelian and northern Sudan savannah areas. Others include the communities in Southern Borno, Adamawa, Taraba (Mambilla), Gombe, Bauchi, Plateau, Benue and Kogi, Kwara and Niger States linguistically of the Bantu and Niger Congo Language groups, which also encapsulate the Kwararafa cultural group. The lands they occupy are known by their names, as the aborigines, such as Tarok land, Berom land, Igala land, Nupe Land, Tiv Land, Idoma land, Adara land, Atyab land, Bura land, Jukun land, Mwaghavul land etc. These peoples are thus the autochthonous communities of the areas they occupy, as distinct from those who came into those territories after British conquest of the Middle Belt region and its incorporation into the Nigerian state. Under the British colonial rule most of nationalities were forcefully subjected to the Fulani emirates and their traditional institutions derecognized by the colonial administration. Their struggles for a Middle Belt Region were suppressed by the British, and subsequently, by the Northern Region Government. The creation of states from 1967, staunchly resisted by the Northern oligarchy, began to address the colonial structures of domination, but has stopped far short of removing them.

Since 2015, as the security situation in the North East has improved, it has rapidly worsened in the Middle Belt and North Central States and in the Zamfara-Birnin Gwari axis in the North West. The news media are awash with grisly stories and pictures of mangled corpses of children, women and men, and charred remains of settlements and communities in the new theatre of terror. However, upon surveying the same news media, two opposing positions on the security situation in Nigeria are visible, particularly as they concern the spiraling violence against the people and communities of the central Nigerian states stretching from Southern Borno, Southern Yobe, Adamawa, Gombe, Bauchi down to Taraba State in the North East; to Plateau, Benue,

Nasarawa, Kogi, Kwara, FCT and Niger States in the North Central; and to Southern Kaduna and Southern Kebbi in the North West. On the one hand stand the federal government, with its spokespersons Lai Mohammed, Garba Shehu and Femi Adesina, as well as the information departments of the security agencies, who stridently maintain that Nigerians asked the Buhari administration for peace and security and that the government has given them peace and security. On the other hand is the growing groundswell of indignation of most citizens, who are incensed and frustrated at the lackadaisical and insensitive posture of the government towards the worsening violence and insecurity in the southern and central Nigerian states.

This paper seeks to answer a number of questions. First, owing to the activities of the terrorist networks in the Middle Belt region since 2013, and their increased ferocity, scale and regularity of attacks in the region since 2015, do the people and communities of the Nigerian Middle Belt face existential threats? Second, since the Fulani herdsmen launched their war in 2013, has the Federal Government of Nigeria been able to ensure the security of lives and property of the affected peoples in the affected states, as provided by Section 14, sub-section 2b of the 1999 Constitution? Third, what are the factors responsible for this painful and horrifying failure of the government to apprehend the terrorists, bring them and their sponsors and collaborators to justice in order to secure the lives and peace of the people and communities? In the face of the visible failure of the Nigerian state through the instrumentality of the government and other state institutions, what are the options available to the Middle Belt peoples to ensure their physical survival, as well as their economic and social well-being within the Nigerian federation? Our exploration of the issues hereunder should provide some basis for the discussion by this Conference in order to arrive at realistic, actionable and timely interventions in the immediate, short, medium and long terms.

#### DO THE MIDDLE BELT PEOPLES FACE EXISTENTIAL THREATS?

Under the present circumstances of generalized attacks and widespread killings and destruction in the Middle Belt region, that the people and communities therein face threats to their very existence is no longer a moot question. On a daily basis there are reports of violent attacks, gruesome killings and ferocious destruction of towns, villages and communities across the region. It is a war situation, which was openly declared by the Boko Haram, but has so far not

been openly declared by the Fulani militias, but increasingly as devastating as the Boko Haram war. The question of existential threats to the Middle Belt nevertheless arises because the Nigerian state as exemplified by the federal government do not treat “the situation” in the Middle Belt with the same commitment as they do that in the North East. As the Fulani militia attacks have grown in scale and regularity to affect communities in the South East, South South and South West Zones, the rest of Nigeria, and indeed the world, realize that there is a war raging against the communities in the Middle Belt region. Under any situation of insecurity as now exists in the Nigerian Middle Belt, the victims are under threats of different dimensions.

1. Killings and attacks claimed not less than 6,000 people in the region between 2015 and 2017. In 2018 each attack ends up with tens and hundreds of people killed. The people therefore live in perpetual fear of being attacked. They are also being physically attacked and killed. Most of those killed are women and children, the women representing the fertile population, those giving birth to present and future generations. The children represent the future, which the attackers are deliberately wiping out in order to create a population crisis in the affected communities. In the final analysis, the population is being decimated, and the future growth of the communities being brutally stopped. The very existence of the Middle Belt communities is being threatened.
2. Communities are being dislocated and driven out of the land they have occupied for thousands and hundreds of years. The immediate result is the termination of the existence of those communities when the people are uprooted and scattered across the country and some into neighbouring countries. Once the people are uprooted and scattered, the communities cease to exist, their social cohesion ends, their languages disappear, and their cultures die out. Eventually, such people disappear from the land and are known only from the pages of history books, if their survivors, or foreign writers venture to write about the previously existing peoples and societies.
3. The peoples and communities are facing terrible deprivations of shelter; the lucky ones are those who end up with relations in the urban areas, or in IDP camps run by humanitarian organisations. Women have been turned into widows and children into

helpless, wandering orphans. They live with perpetual hunger, starvation and disease. The devastation is such that famine relief becomes a mere palliative. Those displaced from their communities have been plunged into poverty and destitution, from being self-supporting families to being beggars and refugees.

4. Indigenous communities are being forcefully and violently removed from their lands, and the lands occupied by others. Some intellectuals even from the Middle Belt are mocking their neighbours, asking for instance, whether the only claim to development and progress in Plateau State is on “ancestral land”. The very concept of ancestral land, accepted by the United Nations and all civilised societies, is being denied in Nigeria by the conquering terrorists and their collaborators in and outside government. Some community leaders allow their land to be used as the staging points for attacking other communities, without realizing that they would also be overrun after their neighbours have been displaced and new hostile occupants become their neighbours.
  
5. Community organizations, and several studies, are documenting the destruction of farmlands, crops, food stocks, economic trees and water sources in communities under attack. First the attackers burn the food stores and food stocks. Then the cattle are driven into the farms to graze on the standing crops. Tubers are harvested and fed to the cattle. Bananas and other trees are shorn of their leaves and then fed to animals, after which the tree stumps are cut down. These acts of economic warfare are calculated to deny the farming communities of food and to force them to leave their lands. Hundreds of thousands of farmers have thus been forced to flee their homes in the rural areas to “safe havens far away from their farms.”<sup>1</sup> Hence, while the federal and state governments are quoting all sorts of non-existing figures on bumper harvest for 2018, there is real threat of famine in the regions and communities under attack in Benue, Taraba, Plateau, Adamawa, Kaduna and Nasarawa states.

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<sup>1</sup> Vanguard newspaper, “Herdsman attacks trigger famine”, June 20, 2018.  
<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/06/herdsmen-attacks-trigger-famine-2/>

6. The greatest threat to the Middle Belt communities is the denial by the authorities of the calamity of the on-going terror attacks. The government spokes-persons either utter inane platitudes “condemning” the attacks, or promise to get to the roots of the problem and “bring the perpetrators to book”, or actually make statements that justify the Fulani herdsmen attacks. Every plan, panacea, or intervention proposed by the government has been to appease the herdsmen, by announcing huge amounts to settle them, get them land or create grazing reserves, cattle colonies or ranches. Such “Fulani centric” panaceas being insensitive to the views of the victims of the incessant attacks, have been opposed across the country, even when some of the proposals have merit, because the government has been so insensitive to the cries across the country for putting a stop to the herdsmen attacks.
  
7. In Nigeria, small businesses drive the economy, as industries have since succumbed to the ravages of globalization. The government has been promoting investment in small-scale enterprises in both rural and urban areas. The attacks by the terrorists and criminal gangs always target businesses for destruction in the Middle Belt. Reports show that the herdsmen target motorcycles, which are confiscated to be used to outfit mobile attack forces by the terrorists.<sup>2</sup> The terrorists destroy shops, grinding machines, trucks, food processing plants, and all other businesses that are within reach. Businessmen, women and farmers are targeted for selective killing.<sup>3</sup> Plantations of crops and commercial tree crops are destroyed. Churches are burnt or blown up, and the religious leaders are killed in order to instigate religious conflict. Economic growth has thus been adversely affected under a regime where businesses are generally suffering due to adverse policies by the government.

#### DENIAL OF FULANI HERDSMEN TERRORISM

Nigerians are fed up and angry over the incessant massacres of unarmed, helpless and desperate children, women and poor citizens who, to borrow the phrase used to describe their

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<sup>2</sup> Tiv Youth Organisation (TYO), Lafia, Nasarawa State, Letter to His Excellency, Alh. Umaru Tanko Almakura, Executive Governor of Nasarawa State, 21 October, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> For instance, a report by Ayu Development Association submitted to Humanitarian Dialogue in 2016 and to the Kukah Centre in 2017, documents cases of such selective killings and assassinations in Ayu Chiefdom in Sanga Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

circumstances by the people of Godogodo in Kaduna State, have been “betrayed by the Government of Nigeria, Kaduna State and Jema’a L.G.A.”<sup>4</sup> While there had been conflicts between herdsman and farming communities for decades in Northern Nigeria, they were small-scale affairs that the traditional village authorities could handle. In Plateau State where there had been violent confrontations since 2008 between the Hausa-Fulani Jassawa and the indigenous Berom, Anaguta and Afizere, the violence was fueled by contestations for the control of Jos metropolis between the two groups. The report by the Shehu Idris Presidential Peace Initiative Committee after the 2004 violence had identified the quest for land by immigrant groups (challenging the rights of the indigenous occupants of the land) as the fundamental driving force for the violence on the Jos Plateau.<sup>5</sup> The massacre of over 300 women and children at Dogo Nahawa in 2010 dramatically changed the nature of the crisis in Plateau State by moving it to the rural areas, where heavily armed herdsman began to sack village communities and occupy them.<sup>6</sup> Surprisingly, after the terror group Boko Haram claimed “responsibility” for that massacre, the fact that local Fulani who spoke the Berom language were identified to be among the attackers<sup>7</sup> appeared to have thrown a veil over the twin facts that the violent terror group had opened a new front in its war against the Nigerian state by recruiting and using local Fulani groups for their war. After the post-presidential elections of 2011, the Fulani herdsman militia transformed itself into the second most deadly terrorist group in Nigeria; and by 2016 had surpassed the Boko Haram in its violent campaign for territory and land occupation.

In June 2014 Major-General Chris Olukolade, Director of Information of the Nigerian Army announced that herdsman captured in Taraba State had confessed that they were members of Boko Haram deployed to continue their war outside Borno State.<sup>8</sup> Researchers and foreign security experts were categorical in 2014 that the Boko Haram had linked up with the Fulani

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<sup>4</sup> Ninte Sarki Youth, “The Full Details of What Happened Between the Fulani Herdsman and Ninte Sarki Community in Godogodo District, Godogodo Chiefdom, Jema’a Local Government, Kaduna State”, 26 – 31 May, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Report of the Presidential Peace Initiative Committee, submitted to the President, Federal Republic of Nigeria, May 2004.

<sup>6</sup> International Crisis Group Working to Prevent Conflict Worldwide, *Curbing Violence in Nigeria (I): The Jos Crisis*, Crisis Group Africa Report N°196, 17 December 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Security and Economic Development Support (SEEDS), *Killer Squads in Berom Land*, SEEDS, Jos, n. d.

<sup>8</sup> This was widely reported in the Nigerian Press; see Temi Banjo, “Fulani herdsman confess membership of Boko Haram”, *Nigerian Monitor*, [www.nigerianmonitor.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/FULANI-HERDSMEN-BOKO-HARAM-ARRESTED](http://www.nigerianmonitor.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/FULANI-HERDSMEN-BOKO-HARAM-ARRESTED)

herdsmen.<sup>9</sup> In April 2014, a group of Middle Belt researchers and scholars held a three-day roundtable in Abuja to collate their research findings. They found that there was “a discernible link between Boko Harm and the Fulani militia masquerading as herdsmen that have been waging an undeclared war against communities in the Middle Belt ...to kill, destroy and steal.” These groups were running common camps around forest reserves, game reserves, grazing reserves, known cattle routes and the Benue trough. New settlements of non-Nigerians were springing up near Middle Belt nationalities in Taraba, Adamawa, Borno and Bauchi states. Support was being given to the foreign imports by religious and traditional rulers, governments and Fulani associations. They were making concerted efforts to capture mountain ranges around the Mambila Plateau, the Jos Plateau around the Attakar Hills, the Kurama Hills in Lere, Kaduna State, the border hills between Plateau and Bauchi states, and the hills running from Sanga in Kaduna State down to Akwanga and Lafia in Nasarawa state.<sup>10</sup> It was not surprising therefore, that in the same year the Fulani herdsmen militia was declared by the Global Terrorism Index as the fourth most deadly terror group in the world after ISIS, Boko Haram and Al Shabab. By 2016 assessors were agreed that the Fulani terrorist network had become more deadly and more devastating than the Boko Haram main group. Figures of deaths through terrorist attacks in Nigeria show that by 2016 herdsmen terror attacks accounted for over 70% of such deaths in Nigeria.<sup>11</sup> Researchers have shown that the Boko Haram had links to terrorist organisations in Western Africa, the Maghreb, the Middle East, Sudan and the Horn of Africa, through which they were receiving training and logistics; established criminal networks, including gun running, cattle rustling, smuggling and drugs, and illegal manufacture of firearms. Hence, Omitola states:

Thus terrorism and crimes have mingled to define the character of the Fulani herdsmen attacks on farmers in Nigeria...Complicity between Boko Haram elements and Fulani herdsmen and other terror groups can account for the intensity and recurrence of the Fulani herdsmen attacks on farmers and the inability of the security agencies to sustain a halt to the attacks.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Bolaji Omitola, “Between Boko Haram and Fulani Herdsmen: Organised Crime and Insecurity in Nigeria”, A Paper Presented at the 5th Institute of Security Studies Conference on Crime and Crime Reduction , 14 and 15 August, 2014, Sandton, South Africa; [www.issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com](http://www.issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com).

<sup>10</sup> Middle belt Researchers and Scholars Roundtable, “Assessment of Conflicts in the Middle Belt 2014”, Monday 28 to Wednesday 30 April 2014. The summary of the report of the roundtable was made available to the Nigerian government.

<sup>11</sup> Yomi Kazeem, “Nigeria now has a bigger internal security threat than Boko Haram”, Quartz Africa, January 19, 2017, at <https://qz.com/886949/fulani-herdsmen-are-now-a-bigger-security-threat-for-nigeria-than-boko-haram/>

<sup>12</sup> Omitola, Between Boko Haram and Fulani Herdsmen.

There are, according to Omitola, cross-border legally existing organisations that give support to, or benefit from the terrorist operations and networks. It is within this context that the “failure of major institutions of the state especially the loss of ability to perform central state functions, such as guaranteeing security and order” should be understood. What this discussion leads to is the question of why the federal government that has been pursuing Boko Haram as a terrorist organization has rejected pressure to treat the Fulani terrorist militia in the same way. This is even more telling as it has been severally observed that Nigerian terrorists that fought for ISIS in Syria and Northern Iraq have been returning to the country since the defeat of ISIS and are joining the Fulani militia and Boko Haram, hence the escalation in the violence in the Fulani attacks against the communities in the Middle Belt states.

#### PERCEIVED COMPLICITY OF THE SECURITY AGENCIES

The Conference of Autochthonous Ethnic Nationalities Community Development Associations (CONAECDA) has asked communities to document their experiences of attacks and the roles of the communities, government and security agencies over the last six years. Community organisations, international organizations, religious leaders and journalists have reported various cases of complicity, negligence, ineptitude, and outright show of bias by the security agencies in the face of the various terrorist threats and violence.

1. Terrorists attack peaceful Fulani herders and rustle their cattle, and farming communities are then blamed for the cattle thefts without any investigation to establish the true facts.
2. Security agencies, especially commanders are accused of “refusing” or failing to respond to distress calls by communities under attack, and they usually would respond after the terrorists have completed their operations and withdrawn. Attackers are reported to operate for between four to eight hours, and to repeat their attacks for several consecutive days without any intervention by the security forces.<sup>13</sup> A report by Amnesty International Nigeria showed that in Plateau State “armed gunmen attacked 11 villages on June 23 (2018) for at least seven hours and killed at least 200 villagers without intervention from security forces.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Segun Olugbile et. Al, “UN condemns Plateau killings; IA says Federal Government encouraging murderers”, <http://www.punchng.com> 29 June 2018.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem.

3. Security personnel are accused of sometimes “luring” victims into traps set by attackers. This was the situation with the Irigwe of northern Plateau, who were taken to a school by soldiers and then abandoned in the evening, whereupon they were massacred later that night by the Fulani militia not far away from the headquarters of the Third Division of the Nigerian Army in Jos.<sup>15</sup> This statement by the Irigwe Development Association demonstrates the situation:

We have cried out to security agencies to rise to the occasion, but it will interest you to know that some of the attacks occurred just few meters from security check points, but the soldiers would rather stay glued to these check points even against distress calls and offer of intelligence by our people. A point in case (sic), which you may have seen on your way here, is Zangwra, where houses by the road side were burnt, and people killed, very close to the check point. Perhaps more worrisome is a video in circulation by a certain cleric, SAWTUL-HIKMAH, which purports that even security personnel of their religious extraction must do the biddings of their religion. He even purports that the message has gone out to the presidency. Comments such as this one no doubt, send a clear message as to what to expect from security personnel, and leave one wondering if indeed, anyone is safe in our land. With this therefore, any failure on the side of security personnel will be viewed as an orchestration of this mandate. This is bad for our country. Such people ironically, are walking freely. Our situation and the seeming lackluster reactiveness (sic) of the federal government in arresting the menace may have been compounded by the frequent claims by the plateau state government that peace has returned to the state.....<sup>16</sup>

4. Failure by security agencies to act on intelligence reports given to them by communities, after which the attacks follow. This was the charge made by the Godogodo people who received written threats of impending attacks, and informed the Police in Jema’a and the Zonal Command in 2016, but they did nothing, and even when the attacks began and they put distress calls to the Zonal Commander for hours, he failed to respond, until after the Fulani had completed their first operation.<sup>17</sup>
5. Persons giving information to security agencies have been subsequently attacked by the terror groups. In a report compiled by Gbagyi Elders in 2016, from documents submitted by District Heads of Gbagyi Chiefdom of Kaduna State, the communities had organized themselves to battle the cattle rustlers and rescue stolen cattle and return them to their Fulani owners, and report such to the Police. The Gbagyi youth and hunters were forced

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<sup>15</sup> “Before We Are Finished -Being Text Of A Press Conference By The Irigwe Development Association (IDA) On The Continuous Gruesome Killings By Herdsmen.”

<sup>16</sup> Press Conference by Irigwe Development Association, loc. cit.

<sup>17</sup> Ninte Sarki Youth, “The Full Details of What Happened Between the Fulani Herdsmen and Ninte Sarki Community in Godogodo...”

to stop when their communities were attacked, and looted, with the attackers warning them never to report to the Police again. Thereafter, most of the Fulani in Chikun LGA were compelled to leave the area to save themselves from the cattle rustlers.<sup>18</sup>

6. Refusal by the security agencies to clear, dislodge or arrest terrorists despite knowing their bases.
7. Refusal to investigate, arrest, and prosecute leaders of Fulani groups who had claimed responsibility for attacks, or claimed to know the reasons for the attacks, usually given as revenge, reprisal and failure of government to arrest farmers accused by Fulani of stealing their cattle. The latest of such scandalous claims was reported by most Nigerian newspapers of Danladi Ciroma, Chairman, Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders' Association, North Central Zone, who was alleged to have stated that the attacks in four LGAs in Plateau State in June, in which over 200 persons were killed, were in retaliation for the stealing of cattle around those communities.<sup>19</sup> Several days later, following widespread condemnations within and outside Nigeria, Danladi Ciroma denied making the statement credited to him.<sup>20</sup> It should however be noted that several similar statements had been made by MACBAN officials in Plateau, Nasarawa and Benue states, not one of them has ever been investigated by the security forces for their revenge statements.
8. Government officials' justification of "reprisals" by herdsmen when farmers defend their families, households, and property when under attack by the herdsmen terrorists.
9. Disarming villagers and depriving them of their basic farm and hunting tools, when the security agencies know that they will not provide protection to remote villages that are under constant attack by the Fulani militias. There are detailed village reports of such happenings presented by the Mambila Stakeholders Forum to the Panel set up by the

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<sup>18</sup> Summary of Information on the Fulani Attacks and Other Violence in Chikun LGA, Compiled by the Gbagyi Traditional Council, Gbagyi Elders Development Association and Gbagyi Development Union", in Southern Kaduna Autochthone Development Associations, *Memorandum to Senate Ad-Hoc Committee on Southern Kaduna Killings*, Kafanchan, 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Comrade Godwin Ameh, "Why herdsmen killed over 86 people in Plateau State – Miyetti Allah", *Daily Post Online*, June 25, 2018, a late report.

<sup>20</sup> Samuel Ogundipe, "We did not describe Plateau Killings as retaliatory – Miyetti Allah". [www.premiumtimesng.com](http://www.premiumtimesng.com), June 20, 2018.

Nigerian Army to investigate the charges of collusion by the security forces made by General T. Y. Danjuma, on 16 April 2018.<sup>21</sup>

10. Insisting that farmers must not defend themselves when under attack, and arresting vigilantes even when they are not involved in criminal activities.
11. “Neutrality” claims by the Army in the face of violent attacks and killings and criminality by herdsmen and other gangs against innocent and defenceless citizens. This is the most compromising position to be taken by any security agency whose constitutional mandate is to keep the peace by apprehending conflict situations, containing criminals and disarm dangerous groups that compromise the territorial integrity of the state. By claiming neutrality, it is a tacit position to the strongest group to win by force of arms without any interference from the security forces.
12. Releasing those criminals caught while attacking communities. For instance, in 2013 following the attack on the Police Station and killing of several officers at Kajuru in Kaduna State, Adara vigilantes tracked and chased the attackers, who opened fire on them and the vigilantes were forced to defend themselves. The local people overpowered the armed gunmen and brought them and their firearms and handed them over to the Police in Kajuru. Thereafter, several Adara youth were arrested and detained in Kaduna, which led to frantic legal battles by the Southern Kaduna Lawyers Forum to secure their release. This scenario was to be repeated after Fulani herdsmen attacked Adara communities in 2017 and killed seven people, and the Adara youth decided to defend themselves after another attack occurred within two days. This community response brought several top federal government officials to the area, which stopped the Adara youth from embarking on combing the bush in search of their attackers.
13. Dismissing as mere “criminal” activities well coordinated attacks by terrorists across several communities at the same time and for extended periods.
14. Dismissing as “fabrications” and “fictitious” repeated reports of helicopters dropping supplies to terrorists in several places in Taraba, Zamfara and Kaduna states, instead of conducting and making public their findings. In January 2018 the Government of Taraba

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<sup>21</sup> Mammilla Stakeholders' Forum, “Incidents of Bias and Collusion Perpetrated by Military Personnel Posted to the Mambilla Plateau”, Memorandum Submitted to the Panel Investigating Allegations of military collusion With Armed Attackers in Taraba, Jalingo, 16 April, 2018.

State raised alarm over the sightings of helicopters suspected of dropping materiel for the terrorists that had been attacking villages in several parts of the state. The Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Media and Publicity, Mr. Bala Dan-Abu drew attention to similar earlier occurrences in Agatu area of Benue State, which the Federal Government ignored, and the same strategy was being used in Taraba state. No one investigated to trace and arrest the owners of the helicopter.<sup>22</sup>

15. Security personnel are accused of blocking other villagers from going to the assistance of their kinsfolk being attacked by the Fulani militia. Such cases have been variously reported on the Mambila Plateau in Taraba State.<sup>23</sup> This was also reported by the Kaninkon Youth in Kafanchan, Kaduna State, when Goska and Bakin Kogi towns were attacked in December 2016.
16. The Nigerian Air Force was accused by Amnesty International of bombing communities in Numan area of Adamawa State during and after Fulani terrorists attacks in December 2017.<sup>24</sup>
17. In its report, the Committee set up by the Taraba State Government to investigate recurrent violence in Wukari and environs found that the military contingent posted to the town in early 2018 remained inside Wukari town while the attacks continued in the surrounding villages and communities without intervention by the Army. In late December 2016, there was a dusk-to-dawn curfew on Kafanchan and surrounding communities. During the curfew, Goska town a few kilometres outside Kafanchan, was attacked and over 40 persons were killed and most of the houses burnt. The Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) observed:

How these Fulani militias passed through a detachment of military and police troops deployed to the area to attack the villages without any intervention by these security forces is something that should agitate the minds of every just and right thinking person.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Justin Tyopuusu, "Helicopter loaded with arms lands in Taraba Village, Government Says", the Punch Online, January 21, 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Mambilla Stakeholders' Forum, "Incidents of Bias and Collusion Perpetrated by Military Personnel Posted to the Mambilla Plateau", Memorandum Submitted to the Panel Investigating Allegations of military collusion With Armed Attackers in Taraba, Jalingo, 16 April, 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Amnesty International, Nigeria: *Analysis of the Air Force Raid in Adamawa State*, 30 January, 2018.

<sup>25</sup> Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), "State of the Nation: The Pogrom in Southern Kaduna and Other Areas in the North: Our Stand", Communiqué of the ECWA General Church Council, March, Jos, 2017.

ECWA further stated:

In most of the attacks carried out on Christian communities, the military and Police have always stood aloof saying they have not received orders to repel the invaders. When Christian youths mobilized to confront the invaders like in the case of Godogodo and Pasakori attacks, the military deliberately blocked them while allowing the Fulani militias to invade the villages and turned them into a killing field as women, children and the elderly were massacred mercilessly.<sup>26</sup>

#### THE QUEST FOR LAND BY THE FULANI

Another issue is the benefit that the Fulani herdsmen are reaping from the complicity between them and other terror networks. The Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN), the open voice of the pastoral Fulani, and the Pastoral Resolve (PARE), the intellectual power-house of Fulani organizations not just in Nigeria but in the West African and Central African sub-regions, have left no one in doubt of their quest for land for Fulani herdsmen, either for grazing reserves, cattle colonies or state sponsored ranches, for which the federal government has announced they will make available N100 billion in the first instance.<sup>27</sup> In PARE and CDD's Rural Banditry report, written jointly with the Centre for Democracy and Development, the case for land for settlement by the Fulani is argued in great detail and in the subsequent policy briefs that were published.<sup>28</sup>

Since 2015, every time there are complaints or outcries against the terrorist murders and destruction by the Fulani the Federal and State Governments bring up "solutions" that are centred entirely on the needs of the Fulani herdsmen. The various committees that the federal government has set up over the last three years have had terms of reference relating only to the needs of the Fulani. There has been no plan made about ending the Fulani militia attacks, reclaiming the lands occupied by the Fulani after the invasion, destruction and displacement of communities, and the rehabilitation of the people and communities that have been devastated by the attacks.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Daily Trust Newspaper, November 20, 2014.

<sup>28</sup> Mohammed J. Kuna and Jibrin Ibrahim, eds, Rural Banditry and Conflicts in northern Nigeria, Centre for Democracy and Development, Abuja, 2015. See in particular, several Policy Briefs published by the Nigeria Stability and Reconstruction Programme (NSRP) and published on the NSRP website.

To place this response by the Nigerian state to the attacks and occupation of indigenous communities' lands by Fulani terrorist militias, we need to appreciate G. J. Harris' treatise on the methods employed by terrorists in achieving their aims and those of their sponsors. Harris quotes the British Government's 1974 definition of terrorism as "the use of violence for political ends, and includes any use of violence for the purpose of putting the public, or any section of the public, in fear." For Harris,

Terrorism is a criminal act that influences an audience beyond the immediate victim. The strategy of terrorists is to commit acts of violence that draws the attention of the local populace, the government, and the world to their cause. The terrorists plan their attack to obtain the greatest publicity, choosing targets that symbolize what they opposed. The effectiveness of the terrorist act lies not in the act itself, but in the public's or government's reaction to the act."<sup>29</sup>

For the Fulani herdsmen terrorists, extreme violence is the means of forcing the Nigerian state to either take land from some communities and hand them to the Fulani; to compel the Nigerian government to acquiesce to their conquest and occupation of indigenous peoples' lands, or to "convince" the victim communities and the general public to give up land to the Fulani in order to stop the violence. The Buhari government's determination to take community lands and make them available for Fulani grazing reserves, cattle colonies or ranches is the outcome that the Fulani militia wants to see resulting from their terror attacks. The blunt refusal by the Buhari government to declare the Fulani militia as terrorists, their making available large resources for meeting the demands of the Fulani, and the apparent ineptitude and alleged collusion by the security forces are some of the reasons the Nigerian public charges the administration of being in concert with the Fulani terror group.

Part of the terrorist propaganda is to put fear into the people by publishing stories that the "Fulani have never been defeated", or Governor Nasir El Rufai's claims that the "Fulani never forget or forgive" and that even after a hundred years they would take revenge. Violence and destruction are the instruments of achieving their objectives; the psychological conditioning that the Fulani will always take revenge is to immobilize the victims into not taking steps to defend themselves for fear of Fulani reprisals. Claims attributed to academics as Professor Umar Labdo Muhammad that Benue state (or any other part of the Middle Belt) belong to the Fulani by right of conquest is not a statement of fact, but serves as a clarion call to the Fulani militia to see their

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<sup>29</sup> G. J. Harris, *A Brief Overview of Global Terrorism Today*, A training Manual, Jos, n. d.

war as being justified. The claim that the “Fulani can never be beaten” is equally false, as the British, French and Germans did so in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early twentieth centuries; but such statements serve the purpose of making the victim communities to cower in fear and to give up their land to the Fulani “benevolent conquerors”.<sup>30</sup>

## DISPLACEMENT AND DISPERSAL OF PEOPLE AND OCCUPATION OF COMMUNITY LANDS BY FULANI HERDSMEN IN SOME STATES OF THE NIGERIAN MIDDLE BELT

### PLATEAU STATE

Between May 2015 and June 2018, according to PIDAN, 54 communities had been driven out and their lands occupied by Fulani herdsmen in four local government areas of Plateau State. The distribution of the occupied villages and communities are as follows:

LGA	Communities under Constant attacks	Communities Sacked and Occupied by Fulani
1. Barkin Ladi	53	22
2. Riyom	56	18
3. Bassa	6	6
4. Bokkos	8	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>54</b>

In June 2018 eleven communities were attacked at the same time in four LGAs, resulting in the deaths of 205 persons in Barkin Ladi, 9 in Riyom, 3 in Jos South and 2 in Mangu. Amnesty International reported that the attacks lasted for seven hours without any intervention by the security forces. Leaders of Fulani Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders’ Association justified the attacks and destruction of the communities as being for revenge and reprisals for cattle theft, supposedly because the government had left the alleged perpetrators to go free. Government has been unwilling to touch those carrying out the massacres, thus giving them silent approval to engage in terror activities. Natives of Plateau State who peacefully demonstrate against the unprovoked attacks are often arrested and imprisoned by the government. The government has not deemed it necessary to investigate or search Fulani villages for weapons and identify the foreign attackers after the attacks.

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<sup>30</sup> See story captioned “Benue belongs to Fulani Herdsmen by Right of Conquest – Prof. Muhammad, published in <http://www.dailypost.ng/2018/01/18/benue-belongs/> *Daily Post*, January 18, 2018.

There is a huge humanitarian crisis arising from the incessant attacks and destruction of property in the communities. As IDP camps have not been provided, the people displaced from the various communities have been dispersed.<sup>31</sup>

On 3 July 2018 the House of Representatives debated the repeated attacks on Plateau natives and the killings and destruction of property that take place in the state. With respect to the attacks of June 2018, the House observed that over 15 villages were destroyed in one day in well-coordinated operation in three LGAs:

- |                  |             |                |
|------------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1. Gana Ropp     | 7. Nghar    | 13. Zargok     |
| 2. Bet           | 8. Rukku    | 14. Kura Worom |
| 3. Rankwok       | 9. Soi      | 15. Ex Lands   |
| 4. Rapwomol      | 10. Tisan   | 16. Shonong    |
| 5. Ratatis       | 11. Katchim |                |
| 6. Bwom Hei Ropp | 12. Kazok   |                |

The House of Representatives noted that “the attacks have a pattern where once a community is attacked, it is cleansed by killing the native inhabitants, the houses burnt and destroyed, and the vacated land taken over for occupation. The cycle is repeated and the pattern replicated in what has clearly manifested as a land grabbing agenda.”<sup>32</sup> In reviewing the history of such attacks on the Plateau, the House of Representatives noted that there has been “malicious destruction” of hundreds of hectares of farm crops belonging to the natives by the herdsmen in a design to cause hunger and economic strangulation of the indigenous population. Churches are burnt to provoke religious crisis and spread the crisis beyond the areas where the attacks take place. Herdsmen despise dialogue and violate peace agreements because that would defeat their land-grabbing agenda. It was observed that there is an odious argument that the Nigerian constitution gives the right to every citizen to live and pursue business in any place of their choice, which has been interpreted to mean that the killer herdsmen have the right to exterminate existing communities, expel them from ancestral lands and customary heritages in order to take land and live and do their cattle business wherever they desire. It is after such massacres and land grabs that appeals

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<sup>31</sup> Plateau Initiative for the Advancement of the Natives (PIDAN), Press Conference held at the Nigeria Union of Journalists Hall, Jos, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2018.

<sup>32</sup> House of Representatives Debate on Matters of Urgent Public Importance, on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2018, on a motion brought by Representatives Istifanus D. Gyang, Edward Gyang Pwajok, Solomon Bulus Maren, Timothy Golu and Johnbull Shekarau.

are made for “peaceful co-existence”. At no time have attempts been made to trace the sources of weapons used by the herdsmen.

Attacks in Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State have been more devastating on the Irigwe ethnic group, whose lands host the Third Division of the Nigerian Army (Rukuba Barracks) in Jos. Attacks against the Irigwe became intense between September and December 2017. In September 2017 two villages were sacked. Almost every day between 8 and 14 October 2017, several Irigwe villages were attacked. In just September and early October 2017, Ncha, Hukke, Nke Omro, Mbuchi, Nzueruuo, Rikwa, Chungu, Kpara, Taagbe and Nke-Donhwro communities were sacked. On 16, 24 and 27 October seven villages were attacked and the inhabitants displaced, all within the surroundings of the 3<sup>RD</sup> Army Division. While the official position was that 11 persons were killed in Irigwe land on 27 September 2018, the villages said 24 were killed. All distress calls to the Army for assistance are ignored. Several attacks have occurred within sight of the army checkpoints in the area.

The Attakar ethnic group is found both in Plateau and Kaduna State. Between 2013 and 2018 there have been not less 20 attacks on the Attakar, with over 200 persons killed and 12,128 driven out of their villages to become IDPs. Twelve Attakar villages have been sacked and their people driven away and the lands converted into grazing fields. These include:

- |            |           |                  |             |
|------------|-----------|------------------|-------------|
| 1. Bashat  | 4. Danti  | 7. Mayit         | 10. Uchan   |
| 2. Bubwat  | 5. Dugrak | 8. Telak         | 11. Zadiye  |
| 3. Chicham | 6. Kirim  | 9. Tinga-Mangwai | 12. Zibwong |

Recently, the Attakar Community Development Association has been setting up make-shift shelters for their displaced kin in efforts to encourage them to reoccupy their lands.

There has been consistent false propaganda that the Plateau natives sold their lands and villages to the Fulani to occupy. On the contrary, analysis of the Plateau attacks shows that the violent and forceful occupation of villages began in 2001 when ten villages on the outskirts of Jos were occupied on 7 and 10 September. In 2012 twenty-five villages were occupied and their inhabitants driven to neighbouring Vwak, Riyom, Farin, Lamba, Barkin Lai, Jos and Bukuru. In 2013, two communities were taken over, while 7 were sacked and occupied in 2014. In 2015 eleven communities were occupied. In some of the attacks the herdsmen attacked several villages

at the same time, as on 10 September 2001 (8 villages), 29 June 2012 and 7 July 2012 (5 and 19 villages, respectively), 19 May 2015 (5 villages). According to the Berom Youth Movement, in most cases when several villages were attacked at the same time, Fulani herdsmen and Boko Haram fighters were involved. After May 2011, the attacks became heavier, for the destruction of the communities, to kill the largest number of people, and to force the population to disperse.

## ADAMAWA STATE

At present the theatre of the Fulani war in Adamawa State is in the Bwatiye communities. Between 2015 and 2017 the government and the press denied that the attacks were by Fulani herdsmen, and blamed Boko Haram for the attacks, after the terrorist group had been driven out by a combined force of native hunters and the armed forces. While reporting that the attacks on several ethnic groups were by Boko Haram, the government did not deploy any military force to counter the attackers. Local Fulani identified with the attackers and those harbouring them were never arrested. The Bwatiye of Demsa, Gire and Numan LGAs organized to defend their communities, and the attackers have been relentless in repeatedly assaulting the Bwatiye communities. Amnesty International reported that several Bwatiye villages were attacked by the Nigerian Air Force, and the Bwatiye believe that this happened because they were defending their villages and not allowing the Fulani to displace and occupy the land.

In the three Bwatiye LGAs, 28 communities have been attacked. In Gire LGA, seven communities were each attacked several times between 2015 and 2016. After each attack the people returned to their villages to prevent Fulani occupation of their land. In Demsa LGA eight communities have been attacked in the same fashion, the last occurring on 10 July 2018. Most of the people were displaced to Numan as IDPs, but are already returning to their villages. In Numan LGA 13 Communities have been attacked and their people driven out several times, but “resiliently return to their destroyed homes to prevent Fulani occupation.” The most recent attack in Numan LGA was on 13 September 2018, and the displaced people are still in Numan IDP camps.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Report submitted to CONAECDA by Chief Wonotanzokan Tagowa of the Bwatiye Development Association, 25 September, 2018.

## NASARAWA STATE

Nasarawa State communities have been the recipients of many assaults by the Fulani herdsmen militia since 2014. Attacks on Nasarawa State often spill into Benue and Taraba States. Between January and July 2018, herdsmen attacks occurred in 314 villages in five LGAs of the state. The report by Nasarawa State branch of CONAECDA is summarized here.

Local Government Area	Keana	Obi	Doma	Awe	Lafia
Villages destroyed	99	25	28	146	16
Houses destroyed	14,056	1,494	1,604	6,919	729
People Killed	162	65	27	131	19
Churches destroyed	206	37	43	224	29
Persons displaced	111,537	11,997	12,840	97,271	8,615
Crops, livestock, economic trees, furniture destroyed is unquantifiable					

Seven villages are currently being occupied by herdsmen following the 2018 attacks, apart from earlier occupation. In total, 314 communities were destroyed, 404 persons killed, 24,064 homes destroyed, 539 churches destroyed, and 242,260 persons displaced. Farm crops destroyed include cassava, yam, rice, guinea corn, soya beans, beans, melons, and benniseed. Tree crops destroyed include orange plantations, palm trees, and mango.

## BENUE STATE

The situation in Benue State has attracted world attention because the Governor has taken steps to make information available on what is happening in his state. In addition, the reaction of the Fulani, the federal government and some Fulani organizations to the anti open grazing law passed by the state has made the Benue State situation “special” or “notorious”. The federal government ignored all calls for the security to intervene in the Benue State killings until the televised mass burial of 71 persons killed in January 2018. A report prepared by the Benue State Government and presented to the federal relief agency SEMA has information that is summarized here. Over 180,000 persons have been displaced. Between 2014 and 2018, some 377 communities in 18 out of the 23 LGAs in the state were attacked. A total of 492 persons were killed, including children, women, youth and the elderly. About 21,586 houses, consisting of 13,798 round huts and 7,793 bungalows were “completely destroyed”. Other economic and

physical assets destroyed as shown below include 86 schools, 163 churches, 34 hospitals and clinics, 30 markets and 69

#### Loss of Community Assets From Herdsmen Attacks in Benue State, 2014-2018

#### Physical, Social and Economic Facilities and Assets Destroyed in Benue State, 2014 - 2018

LGA	Physical, Social and Economic Facilities and Assets Destroyed				
	Schools Burnt	Churches Destroyed	Health Facilities Destroyed	Markets Burnt	Bridges & Culverts
Guma	47	101	21		21
Gwer West	3	15	3		3
Logo	15	25	2		0
Agatu	12	7	5		1
Kwande	7	10	2		0
Makurdi	2	5	1		5
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>34</b>		<b>30</b>

Source: Benue State Government, 2018

culverts and bridges. Nine (9) junior secondary schools were also destroyed. Seven boreholes were damaged in Guma and Gwer West LGAs. Three police posts were burnt in Guma and Agatu LGAs. The damage to standing crops and economic trees has been enormous. Farmlands have gone untilled, crops unharvested, and new crops not planted. In many communities there has been an indefinite halt to their education. Destruction of health facilities has affected maternal and child health.

#### TARABA STATE

In Wukari LGA of Taraba State, the Fulani war has been raging since 2014, when the Nigerian Army reported that the Boko Haram was operating there under the guise of “Fulani herdsmen”. In this LGA alone 330 villages and towns were between 2014 and 2017 destroyed and taken over by Fulani herdsmen and many of them are still being occupied and used as grazing areas by the herdsmen. In 2017 and 2018, many villages areas were attacked in several LGAs, including Ardo Kola (2), Jalingo (2), the Mambila Plateau, Yarro (2), Lau (23) and Ibi (22). In Ibi LGA, the communities displaced include Bagaza, Bakyu, Kwangu, Wanbua and Gazor, which are Jukun villages. Others are Zangon Kaya, Danwanzan, Gidan Gboko, Tse Akpe, Tyomaamo,

Gbasharegh, Tyav, Uwua, Maase, Nyangba, Chakera, Kanshio, Iyev, Angwan Kwalla, Gidan Steven and Gidan William, which were largely inhabited by Tiv. These are said to be “few settlements out of many that have been destroyed by Fulani herdsmen in Ibi LGA”.<sup>34</sup> Sources indicate that some farmers in the first five communities have returned to their destroyed villages but cannot rebuild their houses until after the harvest. In Wukari LGA some of the villagers have returned to 15 settlements in Batanga, Jibu, Chonku Wards, and engage in low level activities.<sup>35</sup>

In Donga GA, eleven (11) communities were attacked and their people displaced. These included Kadarko, Samson, Igo, Sabongida Usha, Malei, Gondo, Ananum, Mile Tara, Wuntubi, Denden and Suntai Daji. Based on information supplied by the Chairman of Donga Local Government Council, people have started returning to Annum, Sabon Gida Usah and Suntai Daji. The information in Taraba and Adamawa shows that in those areas where the native population has resisted the Fulani, the attacks have been repeated and more ferocious, in order to “convince” the indigenous communities that the Fulani will not give up their land grabbing and occupation attacks.

## KADUNA STATE<sup>36</sup>

The situation in Southern Kaduna was quite terrible between 2013 and 2017. Some of the data is presented here, and the reader can easily see the level of destruction in the area.

### Human and Economic Costs of Violent Acts in Gbagyi Chieftdom, Chikun LGA, 2014 - 2016<sup>37</sup>

1. Persons killed	-----	203
2. Rape cases	-----	172
3. General attacks on communities	-----	16
4. Kidnapping cases	-----	106
5. Robberies	-----	105
6. Cattle rustling cases	-----	205

<sup>34</sup> Report by Elder Dante Angyu, CONAECDA Coordinator, Taraba State, 24 September, 2018.

<sup>35</sup> Report by Elder Dante Angyu, 25 September, 2018.

<sup>36</sup> The Kaduna information is taken from Z. K. A. Bonat, “Analysis of Violent Pastoralist Conflicts in the Central Nigerian States: The Unfolding Situation in Southern Kaduna, 2010-2017”, Paper Presented to the *Conference on Pastoralist and Farmers Conflict in Central Nigeria: Learning From the Past*, Organised by the Benue State University, Makurdi, 13 – 16 March, 2017

<sup>37</sup> “Security Report on Cases of Kidnapping, Raping, Cattle Rustling, Armed Robbery, and Persons Killed by Unknown gunmen in Gbagyi Chieftdom, Kaduna State, District by District”, Compiled by the District heads, Gbagyi Chieftdom, and Agbagyi Azakwai Development Association, 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2016.

7. Cattle stolen	-----6,526
8. Sheep Stolen	-----1,406
9. Houses Burnt	----- 76
10. Motor vehicles stolen	----- 3
11. Motor cycles stolen	----- 8
12. Bicycles Stolen	----- 3
13. Person displaced (2016)	----- 813

Source: Compiled by the District Heads, Gbagyi Chiefdom, and Agbagyi Azakwai Development Association, 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2016.

### Analysis of Murders, Burnings and Destruction by the Fulani Militia in Chawai Chiefdom, Kauru Local Government Area of Kaduna State in 2016

Destruction	Ung. Magaji	Kigam	Kiziti	Kikpene	Kitakum	Kishisho	Ung Rimi	Ung. Makera
Killed	19	15	1	2	2	4	3	0
Houses burnt	54	115	9	12	3	4	2	3
Shops burnt	2	0						
Sew machine	1	3						
Corn Mills	2	1						
Motorcycles	2	15						
Water Pumps	0	5						

Source: Chawai Development Association, 2017; Report by the District Head of Kizakoro District, Chawai Chiefdom, Kauru LGA, 2016.

### Summary Of Destruction From Fulani Attacks in Godogodo Chiefdom Jema'a LGA

Number of persons killed	-	49
Number of persons injured	-	31
Total Houses burnt	-	1,492
Number of persons displaced	-	32,452
Persons who lost crops	-	2,000
Domestic animals lost	-	1,000
Cars burnt	-	10
Knapsack sprayers burnt	-	310
Generators destroyed	-	500
Television sets lost	-	450
Corn Mills destroyed	-	40
Sewing Machines lost	-	50
Motorcycles destroyed	-	300
Bicycles destroyed	-	100
Irrigation pumps destroyed	-	300
Shops burnt/vandalised	-	12

### SUMMARY of Destruction from Fulani Attacks on Kagoro Chiefdom

Number of attacks	-	23
Number of deaths	-	68
Number of injured people	-	45
Number of burnt houses	-	485
Number of orphans	-	261
Number of widows	-	36
Number of widowers	-	20
Number of farmlands destroyed	-	621

### **Destruction in Bondon, Moroa Chiefdom, Kaura LGA, 14 March 2014**

<b>VILLAGES</b>	<b>Persons Killed</b>	<b>Persons Injured</b>	<b>Houses burnt</b>	<b>Granaries burnt</b>	<b>Churches</b>	<b>Schools</b>
Me Sankwai	64	5	46	19	2	0
Me Gata	67	4	95	85	2	0
Me Kura	3	0	29	20	2	1
Me Akuku	9	1	36	31	0	0
Me Kakpang	7	0	14	18	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>

Sources: Compiled by the District and Village Heads, Bondon District and Submitted to Moroa Traditional Council, 2014.

### Summary Of Killings In Southern Kaduna 2010 - 2017<sup>38</sup>

1. Kagoro	-	68
2. Bajju	-	28
3. Attakar	-	206
4. Moroa	-	157
5. Sanga	-	400
6. Godogodo	-	49
7. Chikun	-	203
8. Chawai	-	59
9. Kumana	-	12
10. Atyap	-	5
11. Anghan	-	7
12. Bitaro (Ham)	-	3
13. Kaninkon	-	23
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,220</b>

It should be pointed out that in Sanga LGA people were driven out and dispersed in 13 communities or villages and towns between 2014 and 2015. In Jema'a LGA the herdsmen

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<sup>38</sup> Derived from Appendix 1 and the figures supplied by communities and chiefdoms discussed below. Figures for Pasakori, Gidan Waya, Fantswam, and Adara are not yet available and would be provided by the various communities. Police casualties have not been included.

attacked and drive out people from 16 communities in 2016 and 2017. In 2015 and 2016 those displaced in Sanga began to return to their villages, and have substantially returned to their communities and are rebuilding without the assistance of the federal and state governments. In Jema'a LGA, most people have returned except for Antor and Maisamari in Godogodo.<sup>39</sup> In Kaninkon Chiefdom where attacks occurred in 2016 and 2017 the people have returned to their villages, but their farms are being invaded and the crops grazed upon by armed Fulani.<sup>40</sup>

## RESPONSES TO THE “SECURITY SITUATION”

From the analysis made by CONAECDA of perceptions of the terrorist threat and violence, several responses are discernible. There is a range of behavior identifiable as different expressions of fatalism, which Bishop Joseph Bagobiri described as different shades of pacifism.<sup>41</sup> Generally, the pacifists “choose” not to do anything to deter the terrorists, out of some mistaken belief in opposition to self-defence. Drawing from authorities, Bagobiri discussed four types of pacifism, absolute, conditional, selective and active. The active pacifists believe that they should rely on God for deliverance through prayers, and not take action even in self-defence against evil or the threat of evil. Some citizens argue, and indeed the security agencies insist that those under threat or actual violent attack by terrorists should not take up arms to defend their families or communities, but wait for the government to enforce law and order. This argument is untenable when the government and its agencies are complicit, corrupt, and incompetent and actively sabotages its own mandate and responsibilities to the citizens.

Villages, towns, communities, ethnic nationalities and even church denominations are divided as to the actions to take when confronted by the evil of terrorism. The worst cases are found in Plateau State, where the attacks on the northern part of the state are seen as a “Berom problem”, even when communities have been attacked in Mangu, Bokkos, Langtang and Wase LGAs. Some of the Plateau elite even spread the false information that the Berom “sold” their land to the Fulani, when more than forty Berom communities have been attacked, their people killed and

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<sup>39</sup> Report by Agony Jety, Secretary, Sanga Development Association, 24 and 25 September, 2018.

<sup>40</sup> Phone interview with Zakka Ze Kadima, community leader at Bakin Kogi, Kaninkon, 25 September, 2018.

<sup>41</sup> Bishop Joseph Danlami Bagobiri, “On the Permissibility or Otherwise of the Use of Force in Christianity”, Being a Presentation Made at the Consultation Forum of Church Leaders in Northern Nigeria on Peace, Elections and Security of Churches and Church Members, at the ECWA Headquarters Jos, Plateau State, Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> – Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2014.

driven out and the villages occupied by Fulani. Under these circumstances there can be no cooperation between communities, and the terrorists use this to divide and conquer communities one after another.

Some communities have responded to the terrorist attacks by organizing vigilantes; but most communities have responded only after they have been attacked. Communities have no information or intelligence about the terrorists: their bases, support organisations, their sources of funding and logistics. Apart from generally seeing the terrorists as “Fulani”, communities are unable to distinguish between the armed attackers and the cattle rustlers, most of who happen to be Fulani. There is total concentration on Miyetti Allah (MACBAN) and Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore because they make noise on radio, when they may not be the organisers of the attacks. The communities have no knowledge of those who procure arms and ammunition for the Fulani herdsmen they see wielding AK 47 rifles like ordinary sticks. The communities do not understand why the military and police take away their dane guns, cutlasses and axes, which they use as farm tools, when the same security forces do not take away the automatic firearms carried publicly by the herdsmen. The communities have no training, logistics and organization to deal with the attacking terrorists, and cannot take preventive and preemptive actions to protect their families and property from being attacked. A recent report by the Kukah Centre shows that the victims of the attacks have no voice, with no access to the media or the government institutions where they can articulate their views and lay bare their conditions. During the validation and dialogue session involving local community organisations and Fulani groups resident in Southern Kaduna, the frustration and helplessness of the ordinary Fulani, who are under constant suspicion, was clearly visible.<sup>42</sup> They too have lost cattle mostly to cattle rustlers, who are mostly of Fulani extraction.

The last groups from the victim communities are the elites, traditional, political, clerical, business, intellectual etc. The Middle Belt elites have no think tank, and are mostly tucked “safely” behind their walled houses in the major urban areas, especially Abuja, Lagos, Kaduna, Jos, Makurdi, Ilorin, Minna, Yola, Bauchi, Gombe, and Jalingo etc. Some of the elites whose

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<sup>42</sup> The Kukah Centre, *Memory and Inter-Group Dialogue in Southern Kaduna*, Research Report, May 2017. The Validation meeting took place at the Unity Wonderland Hotel, Kafanchan on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2017.

communities have been attacked lost their village houses to arsonists, but as long as they have their urban residences they suffer minimal trauma. However, the terrorists have devised new strategies to entrap the Middle Belt elites; they attack the communities during funerals of prominent personalities. Hence, the attacks on Barkin Ladi in 2012 resulting in the deaths of a senator, members of federal and state houses of assembly, and the recent one of June 2018 where top party officials caught returning from the APC Convention suffered casualties. All over the Middle Belt, starting with the Emir of Gwoza in Borno State, to paramount rulers in Plateau and Kaduna State, to District and Village Heads, the Boko Haram and the Fulani terrorist militia are assassinating members of the traditional elite and executing pastors and priests, in their houses and inside the churches. The rural based elite, who have lived with the people, or retired and gone back home, the pastors in the churches, have lost their homes and businesses, and have become IDPs living outside their states. Another method is the use of State Governments and their officials and traditional rulers to take over land in the name of “foreign investment”, and then within a few years “divest”, but mostly the “project fails”, and the land is turned over to various groups, who either settle their people or put their cattle on it.

Commissions of enquiry and scholarly studies have established that on the grazing reserves, from Zamfara to Niger to Kaduna states, Fulani elites are grabbing the land and turning it into private property. This has been established as fact in the Birnin Gwari and Kachia Grazing Reserves in Kaduna State, where by 2012 about 30% of the land in the Birnin Gwari reserve had been taken over by civil servants, politicians and businessmen, while the process of the alienation on the Kachia reserve had just begun.<sup>43</sup> In Niger state the Fulani on the reserve are cultivating much more than the four hectares permitted, while the influx of herdsmen displaced by cattle rustlers in the Birnin Gwari and Zamfara areas is further complicating the situation.<sup>44</sup> Dr. Ismail Iro, an ardent advocate of the development of grazing reserves in Nigeria, has highlighted these developments, as well as several other problems and challenges that bedevil the development of grazing reserves in northern Nigeria. One of the most important is the expansion of large-scale agricultural holdings across marginal grazing lands, and across stock routes; as well as the taking over of grazing reserves land by large farmers benefiting from state and World Bank-funded

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<sup>43</sup> Kaduna State Peace and Reconciliation Report, 2013.

<sup>44</sup> Ismail Iro, “Grazing Reserve Development: A Panacea to the Intractable Strife Between Farmers and Herders”, n. d., <http://www.gamji.com/fulani.htm>

agricultural development projects.<sup>45</sup> While discussing these problems, the National Livestock Projects Division of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and other proponents point at the rapid increase in population and the attendant takeover of land for agricultural purposes. However, they do not appear to see the contradictions in advocating for increased numbers of grazing reserves, which would end up with the same problems.<sup>46</sup> It should be obvious that the objective of developing mixed farming on the grazing reserve in Niger State would have to depend on transforming from extensive open grazing to more intensive systems relying on fewer cattle with high yields in meat and milk. Calculations of the livestock ratios to grazing land indicate that there would not be sufficient land to make available for the original 415 grazing reserves designated in 1965.

#### CATTLE RUSTLING AND THE RURAL BANDITRY NARRATIVE

For more than five years studies have shown that cattle rustling has been used as a strategy for terror financing in Northern Nigeria.<sup>47</sup> Okoli and Okpaleke discussed the use of cattle rustling as means of raising funds for terrorist activities. It was argued by Fulani terrorists through a video “AK 47”, posted on the Internet, that they were engaged in cattle rustling to prevent Hausa (or other people) in Zamfara State from rearing cattle. Hence, between 2011 and 2014 almost all the cattle kept by large farmers in Chikun and Birnin Gwari LGAs of Kaduna State, and in southern Zamfara were either stolen, or transferred by the owners to their houses in Kaduna and Funtua towns. The myth of targeting only non-Fulani cattle owners was exposed when the ordinary Fulani transhumance pastoralists became the major victims of the cattle rustlers. In Chikun LGA the Army and the Gbagyi youth struck up a partnership in fighting the cattle rustlers, until the Gbagyi villages began to be sacked for their people’s participation in rescuing cattle and returning them to their owners. In Kauru LGA of Kaduna State, youth formed the CAN Brigade to fight the cattle rustlers, and were so successful that the cattle thieves changed their tactics. In

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<sup>45</sup> Ismail Iro, “Grazing Reserve Development: A Panacea to the Intractable Strife Between Farmers and Herders”, n. d., <http://www.gamji.com/fulani.htm>

<sup>46</sup> National Livestock Project Division, Department of Livestock, Federal Ministry Of Agriculture & Rural Development, “National Livestock Development Project’s Position Paper On “Bill For An Act To Provide For The Establishment, Preservation And Control Of National Grazing Reserves And Stock Route And The Creation Of National Grazing Reserves Commission And For Purposes Connected Therewith”, Submitted to the Joint Lower Committees On Agriculture & Rural Development And States & Local Government Affairs at the Public Hearing on Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2013”.

<sup>47</sup> Al Chukwuma Okoli and Francis N. Okpaleke, “Cattle Rustling and dialectics of Security in northern Nigeria”, *International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Science*, Vol. 2, No. 3, April 2014, pp. 109 – 117.

reports by District Heads in Kumana Chiefdom in 2016, it became clear that by 2015 the cattle rustlers were no longer interested in stealing the cattle. They simply captured the Fulani children and women, and demanded for millions of Naira for their release. Those who informed the Police about where they delivered the ransom monies were either killed or their wives and children were killed. Within 2016 alone, the Fulani cattle owners paid about 24 million naira in ransom money to the cattle rustlers in Kauru LGA, and about the same amount in Chikun LGA.<sup>48</sup> Reports made to the security forces in Kaduna State resulted in sporadic raids on cattle rustlers, after which they were left to continue with their criminal activities. These cattle thefts reduced as the Fulani moved away, and the terrorists increased their kidnappings of farmers and travellers along the Abuja and Birnin Gwari roads. In all of these occurrences, the local farming populations were the allies of the Fulani in their battles against the cattle rustlers.

On 10 May 2016 during the Public Hearing organized by the Joint Senate Committees on Agriculture and Defence and Security on Farmers and Herdsmen Conflicts, Dr. Iya Iya, a security expert, made a public presentation before the Nigerian State on the connection between cattle rustling and the funding of terrorism and money laundering in Nigeria. Dr. Iya argued eloquently, even with repeated efforts to disrupt his presentation by the chairman of the hearing, to show that cattle rustling had been used by the Boko Haram and more strategically the Fulani militia, to raise funds for their terror campaigns. Other researchers have published data on the funding of terrorism and insurgency by Boko Haram through cattle rustling.<sup>49</sup>

In reviewing various reports on cattle rustling, Adewale Kupoluyi states that most cattle rustlers were found to be Fulani, who have the knowledge of the forest tracts and how to move large numbers of cattle. In Plateau state and other places, no local non-Fulani people were apprehended as cattle rustlers. Yet the charges of cattle rustling by Miyetti Allah have become the rationale and justification for violent attacks and killings in the farming communities.<sup>50</sup> In

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<sup>48</sup> Southern Kaduna Autochthones Development Associations, Memorandum to the Senate Ad-Hoc Committee on Southern Kaduna Killings...

<sup>49</sup> See papers "How Boko Haram funds terrorism, insurgency through proceeds of rustled cattle", <http://donokere.blogspot.com.ng/2016/how-boko-haram-channels-proceeds-from.html>; and "How Boko Haram makes its cash from stolen cattle", <http://venturesafrica.com/boko-haram-makes-cash-from-stolen-cattle>

<sup>50</sup> Adewale Kupoluyi, "Security forces and herdsmen attacks", <http://www.punchng.com/security-forces-and-herdsmen-attacks/> May 1, 2018. See also *The Nation* newspaper "Editorial", May 1 2018.

opposition to the above picture has merged a strong intellectual argument that depicts cattle rustling as an aspect of rural banditry. In the first chapter of the *Rural Banditry in Northern Nigeria* report, Samuel Egwu states:

Rural banditry associated with cattle rustling has become a major concern for public policy in contemporary Nigeria. It refers to the practice of stealing cattle and animals from the ranches... Furthermore, cattle rustling and rural banditry appear to be tied to the incessant conflict between Fulani herdsmen and crop farmers.<sup>51</sup>

While the author admits that there were other Fulani involved in the cattle rustling, the impression created is that the cattle losses are “part of the incessant resource conflict with settled farmers and/or fellow Fulani rustlers.”

The discussion of rural banditry in Plateau State is cast within the narrative that the violence on the Plateau is part of the wider web of resource competition and conflict, cattle rustling being one of the factors. Attacks by herdsmen on settled farmers are seen as “reactive” violence caused by cattle rustling. In the *Policy Brief* on Plateau state, it is stated:

“The security situation in Plateau state is increasingly being shaped by rising incidences of cattle rustling [(Jos south, Barkin Ladi, Riyom, Wase and Langtang Local Government Areas (LGAs)]. These incidences have increased distrust among and between communities and provoked aggression.”<sup>52</sup>

It is agreed by the authors of the Plateau *Policy Brief* that “The majority of conflicts therefore relates to access and control over economic resources”; that cattle rustling is a “criminal enterprise” and “a major security challenge in Plateau state, that has continued to fuel violent conflict and insecurity.” The narrative is thus moved from seeing cattle rustling as part of the system of terrorist financing, systematic provocation and rationale for visiting violence on communities, to seeing it merely as “part of an underground economy that is deeply attached to the political economy of some agrarian communities.”<sup>53</sup> In this narrative cast in abstract terms, no one is to blame for these supposedly *independently existing economic and social forces*. There is no linkage with terrorism, and certainly no question about why such level of violence is not occurring in other countries where the crop farmers and nomads experience conflicts. The

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<sup>51</sup> Samuel Egwu, “The Political Economy of Rural banditry in Contemporary Nigeria”, in Mohammed J. Kuna and Jibrin Ibrahim, eds, *Rural Banditry and Conflicts in Northern Nigeria*, Centre for Democracy and Development, Abuja, 2015, pp. 13-67.

<sup>52</sup> Centre for Democracy and Development, *Policy Brief: Rural Banditry and social Conflicts in Plateau State*, CDD, Abuja, 2015.

<sup>53</sup> Centre for Democracy and Development, *Policy Brief: Rural Banditry and social Conflicts in Plateau State*

question is not asked why the violence is mostly one-sided, and unleashed with the use of sophisticated weapons by the herdsmen militias. What the communities contend with are attacks which are increasingly being justified by alleging cattle rustling, which is laid at the feet of the farming communities, without any evidence that they are involved in stealing Fulani cattle to the magnitude of provoking massacres of hideous proportions. In this regard the report of the Taraba State Committee on the Wukari crisis states:

It is pertinent to note that cases of cattle rustling are not connected to the farmers. The cattle rustlers take advantage of the destructions on the farms to perpetrate their criminal acts and unfortunately, the cattle rearers vent their anger on the farmers whenever their cows are stolen, when the farmers are not the thieves as the rustlers are faceless and complex in composition.<sup>54</sup>

The cattle rustling narrative drives a wedge between the farming communities and the Fulani herdsmen that are both victims of the terrorist networks that use cattle rustling for financing their war, and keeps them from uniting to face the common menace of terrorist attacks in the Middle Belt communities. Farmers also sometimes vent their anger on herdsmen for destruction of farms by herdsmen from outside their localities, who often deliberately drive their cattle onto the farms in order to provoke reactions from the farmers, and then the avengers would come to wreck “vengeance”. The generalized violence has made the traditional methods of settling farmers/herders conflicts redundant because we are no longer dealing with such conflicts, but with a war waged by terror groups for the purpose of land grabbing.

## SALUTARY RESPONSES TO THE EXISTENTIAL THREATS

Following the above analysis, there is no doubt that Nigerian Middle Belt communities face existential threats. There are threats of physical existence, as well as economic, political and cultural threats. How to address these threats are the major challenges. Some of the strategies have to be worked out outside conference rooms. Some other solutions are deducible from the analysis. Let us borrow from the recommendations in the *Report of the Taraba State Peace Committee on Wukari Crisis, November 2015*. They advised the government to:

1. Urgently resettle IDPs in their villages so that they can rebuild their communities.
2. Compensate those whose houses, businesses and farmlands have been destroyed.

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<sup>54</sup> Report of the Taraba State Peace Committee on Wukari Crisis, Submitted to His Excellency the executive Governor of Taraba State, Arc. Darius Dickson Ishaku, November 2015.

3. Increase security patrols to apprehend attackers and bring them to justice.
4. Ensure that heads of security agencies on special assignments are not be allowed to stay long in their posts to forestall familiarity and corruption by the local forces.

Obviously such recommendations will have very limited impact, and we must search for more fundamental solutions.

The Mambila Progressive and Cultural Association offers some very interesting recommendations, which we should summarise here:

1. Take steps to cause the implementation by the Nigerian government of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, 2007, and the *International Labour Organisation Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries*, 1989, through legislation that protects the rights of communities and families against land alienation by the State, for “development” and “public interest “ that ignore the rights of the indigenous landowning communities. They cite legislations by Ghana, Tanzania, and Mozambique etc to back their submission. This means launching a concerted challenge on the Land Use Act, so that pro-community legislation could be passed and new systems of land administration evolved to protect community land rights. This calls for concerted cooperation with legislators at the state and federal levels, whose interests may run counter to the interests of their communities. It is a fact that without the LUA as it is the government would have not way of taking community lands and allocating them to other groups. The argument is based on international law on indigenous people’s “*Right to free, prior and informed consent in relation to land and natural resources; to secure the access and use of lands for peasants, pastoralists, forest dwellers, fisherfolk and indigenous peoples*”.
2. Institute legal cases at the International Criminal Court for War Crimes against officials of the Government for criminal negligence, collusion with armed gangs and terrorists, and aiding the removal of indigenous communities from their ancestral lands. Very interesting cases are cited to show that this can be done, under the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights.

3. Instituting legal cases at the International Court of Human Rights and/or the ECOWAS Court, against governments that deprive communities of their lands. The Mambillans cite a case at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to back up this argument. A Senior Advocate of Nigeria informed us that there are even better cases that have been decided by the European Court of Human Rights, the US Supreme Court and the Indian Supreme Court.<sup>55</sup>

These are certainly interesting options that should be pursued but they will require serious research, documentation and advice by expert investigators and lawyers. While such options are being examined it should be borne in mind that international diplomacy always leans toward the state (government) that is accused of serious human rights violations.<sup>56</sup> Very strong cases must be established for the ICC and ICHR to send investigators to establish bases for hearing such cases. But most important of all, the terrorist networks that are on conquest missions will neither be waiting nor be bound by legal processes.

Dr. Obiageli Ezekwesili, former Minister of Education, asked President Buhari and the federal government to:

1. Stop biased handling of the herdsmen's attacks and killings.
2. Stop the blame game against former administrations and confusing statements on Gaddafi of Libya, and stop rationalizing the violence by saying that Fulani cattle have been stolen.
3. Commission urgent independent research and study into the root causes for "an evidence-based comprehensive approach to build back the broken community peace".
4. Agree on market-based policy on cattle ranching and grass/forage supplies.
5. Convene meetings of communities "affected by terrorist-herdsmen, and use presidential power to mobilise Nigerians for sustainable peace. Communities should be supported to institute local conflict resolution systems, mechanisms and platforms.

Ezekwesili's recommendations are typical of the market-based approach, which many Nigerian elites have been making, but which MACBAN and their supporters have vehemently opposed.

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<sup>55</sup> Phone discussion with Elisha Y. Kurah, SAN, at Kaduna on 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2018.

<sup>56</sup> See, *Pamphlet No. 11: The Protection of the Rights of Minorities and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO).

MACBAN, Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore and others want presidential power to be used to take land and give to the Fulani, and in the alternative, validate Fulani “ownership” of lands currently forcefully occupied after violently displacing the owners of the land. The government will only do this when there is serious pressure with consequences to the legitimacy of the government not only nationally, but internationally as well.

## RESTRUCTURING NIGERIA

Communities across the Middle Belt mobilized to present united positions to the National Conference for restructuring Nigeria for the protection of Nigerian minorities. As the secretariat for these efforts CONAECDA summarized the positions, in the document titled *Some Resolutions of the National Conference That Are of Direct Significance to Minorities Prepared By The Secretariat of the Conference of Autochthonous Ethnic Nationalities Community Development Associations (CONAECDA)*, which have been discussed with community development associations and with late Dr. Bala Takaya and adopted by the Middle Belt Forum and presented to the Northern States and Traditional Rulers Committee on Restructuring Nigeria. The main elements include:

1. Creation of 9 additional states in the northern states
2. Creation of additional LGAs
3. Establish State Police and Community Policing
4. Institute Rotational Presidency
5. Declare the Federal Capital Territory as a State
6. Adopt the Declarations on Minorities and Indigenous Peoples Rights passed by the UN as schedules of the Nigerian Constitution, and set up Minority and Indigenous Rights Commissions at Federal and State levels.
7. Make civil rights, political rights and freedoms, as well as social, economic and cultural rights and freedoms in the Nigerian constitution justiciable.
8. Enforcement of Federal Character at Federal and State Levels.

9. Reduction in the level of federal control of financial resources, and to scale down presidential powers and make the National Assembly stronger in holding the Executive Arm to account.

*In addition* there should be recognition of four sectors of the economy: Public, Private, Community and Household Economy. This was what enabled the war-ravaged European economies to be rapidly rebuilt and transformed after the second world war, through heavy investment in the household and community sectors.

There is also very strong need to *restructure economic relations*, to reduce capital transfers, make the exchange and interest rates nationalistic, and require transnational corporations to make investment in capital goods production mandatory within a policy framework of industrialising Nigeria within ten years. The right of collective bargaining should be fully returned to labour through the review of anti-labour laws passed by the military regimes.

These actions will need cooperation across geopolitical zones in Nigeria to support legislation by the National Assembly to make these effective. This raises the fundamental question of the political choices that Middle Belters make based on the personal calculations and interests of individual politicians. While undoubtedly the PDP federal government was weak, inept and corrupt, there is now a strong government that thrives on self-generated propaganda, under which violence and impunity and extreme violations of human rights are being perpetrated. At no time in the history of Nigeria since 1960 have northern minorities and indigenous peoples of the Middle Belt faced such threats to their very existence. The political choices people of the Middle Belt make in 2019 will determine whether the above resolutions could be implemented and at what speed.

#### COMMUNITY-BASED RESPONSE TO THE CURRENT HERDSMEN TERRORISM

There is need to make certain demands of the Nigerian government, and to find ways to make the government respond to them.

1. There is an urgent and present need to set up a Truth Commission chaired and manned by experts and unbiased personalities, to conduct in-depth hearing into both the Boko Haram insurgency and the Fulani militia attacks. This will give the victims the opportunity to present their plight to the world. In doing so care must be taken to cover all legal loopholes and lacunae, so that the fate of the Oputa Panel Report does not befall this proposed Truth Commission. The National Assembly should pass the enabling legislation to give the Commission legal and financial backing.
2. Given our current situation we must ask the Federal Government to stop the Fulani attacks immediately. It is within their power to do so. The report by the *Chinua Achebe Center for Leadership and Development*<sup>57</sup> makes it abundantly clear that it is within the power of the federal government to dismantle the Fulani terrorist network within a few weeks.
3. From the experiences of the various communities there is no alternative to Community-Based Security. The UNDP's *Community Security and Social Cohesion* framework should be adopted. It is communities that should be empowered to defend their settlements and households, secure their farmlands and food stocks, and their churches, mosques and schools. It should be based on the principle of enabling communities to take care of their security before the security forces arrive. The communities know their environments, and should be empowered to identify and track the local agents of the terrorists, as has happened in Borno State. Communities should be assisted to develop functional early warning systems and report to security agencies, and to blow whistles against any security personnel that fail to act on credible intelligence. Communities should be economically empowered to recover the occupied lands, either by present generations or by those to come, as history has always been on the side of the oppressed who seek justice. We believe that the dismantling of traditional institutions in some states occurred following pressure that the District and Village level traditional structure should

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<sup>57</sup> "Startling research findings on Fulani herdsmen, a must read. – By Professor Charles Adisa".  
<https://oblongmedia.net/2016/05/26/startling-research-findings-on-fulani-herdsmen-a-must-read-by-professor-charles-adisa/>

be reorganized to provide intelligence on forces of destabilization and criminality under the present situation of insurgency and rural terrorism. Community based structures must be put in place to be empowered to develop early warning and early response mechanisms, to anticipate, preempt and prevent attacks and conflicts. The UN in 2016 developed a framework for developing processes for preventing violent conflict, and for defusing, de-escalating conflicts and containing them. Our communities should be encouraged to identify and work with local friendly Fulani leaders to build peace in the rural areas and to sustain it. There are experts who can work with communities to develop security consciousness, organizational consciousness, preemptive consciousness, preventive consciousness and defensive consciousness and make them functional in our communities. The Church should be encouraged to revisit late Bishop Joseph Bagobiri's treatise on the permissibility of self-defence in Christianity for defending lives and property, and to protect the Church from being destroyed by evil.<sup>58</sup> Cultivate friends who stand for peace based on justice.

4. For long-term peace and security in the Middle Belt region, a number of factors have to be taken into consideration. The first is the responsibility of the Nigerian State for the development of the country and the people. The UN Declaration on the Right to Development is only partially reflected in Chapters 2 and 4 of the Nigerian constitution. But more importantly is the fact that the Nigerian ruling class is almost always concerned about their quest for primitive accumulation and the use of the state institutions to facilitate it. The welfare of Nigerians, and the internal mobilization of resources and their investment for development beneficial to the people should become the centre-piece of the development agenda of the government. In this case making resources directly available for developing grazing resources in the far northern states must be pursued with vigour. In the 1980s and early 1990s the Club du Sahel used community development organizations, and especially women's groups in Burkina Faso and Mali to plant trees, develop grazing resources and to adopt dry farming practices that have had positive impacts on the livelihoods of farming and pastoral communities in those countries.

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<sup>58</sup> The paper by Lt. Col Richard P. Martin, US Air Force (rtd), "A biblical View of Self Defense: A Biblical Defense of This Misunderstood Doctrine", September 26, 2012, should be useful in discussing the fatalism and pacifism that demobilizes Christians in Northern Nigeria.

Instead of awarding gigantic contracts to so-called environmental specialists who deliver no results, such resources should be channeled to the rural dwellers to apply environmentally sustainable agricultural and livestock production practices in the areas best suited for large livestock production in the northern savanna zone.

5. Second, it is not conceivable that encouraging cattle herders to move to the Middle Belt region is sustainable, because land resources will run out and more conflicts will occur. As it is, the foundation for serious violent conflicts between the communities being attacked and displaced by herdsmen is being laid, as many communities are already preparing their people for such struggles. The NLPD's proposal to revive the grazing reserves, starting with those in Sokoto, Zamfara, Kano, Katsina, Jigawa, Yobe, Borno, Bauchi, Niger and Kebbi states should be revisited. It will be found that those who converted the communal grazing areas and some grazing reserves into large scale agricultural estates are not the small farmers that now bear the brunt of the herdsmen terrorist attacks. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as D. E. Ferguson established, members of the ruling classes own the substantial proportion of the cattle in northern Nigeria, which are grazed or herded by Fulani who no longer have cattle. This process has accelerated, with members of the elite across the northern states owning large herds of cattle that are herded by nomads. These elites would be the direct beneficiaries of any grazing reserves created with the displacement of farming communities. The traditional, bureaucratic and business elites that own the cattle have the resources to change their livestock production methods. Instead of investing in ranching and forage resources development on-farm for more productive cattle and sheep, the elites have plunged the country into a spiral of violence for the creation of grazing reserves, which they will then appropriate as private land estates. In 2016/2017, the Kaduna State Government awarded a contract for clearing 3000 hectares of the Kachia grazing reserve for cultivating pulses for export to China. It is important to transform livestock production, but the interests fueling violence for land grabbing, which they would later convert to private use should be stopped. Where land alienation should take place, it should be with the free consent and agreement of the landowning communities, and not through violence, destruction and displacement of farming communities.

## THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN RESOLVING THE HERDSMEN AND FARMERS CONFLICTS

A realistic approach will have to be based on a clear distinction between the normal farmers/herders conflicts, and the terrorism by the Fulani militia and their allies the Boko Haram and ISIS West Africa. The latter has made it impossible for the time-tested and honoured mechanisms that had worked over the decades before the Boko Haram insurgency and their link up with the Fulani terror groups.

1. What is uppermost now is to *end the violence in the rural areas now*, by containing the attackers and neutralizing them. This is the primary responsibility of the government of Nigeria. The first step will be to change the narrative, and to persuade the Nigerian government, by whatever pressure necessary, to accept and publicly own up to what the international community has already determined, that the Fulani militia is a terrorist group linked with international terrorism, for purposes of grabbing land through violent means by driving out the indigenous communities that have occupied their lands and territories for hundreds and often thousands of years. Once the government accepts this, then it would be seen that the on-going herdsmen attacks are the usual terrorist methods of using violence and the threat of violence for achieving political and economic objectives. For the media and government to reject this truth is deliberate obfuscation and obscurantism, to prevent the truth from being known, and to be complicit in the genocidal attacks by the terrorist groups. Every effort should be made to
2. Efforts to create the impression that the Fulani attacks are “communal clashes” are false. In his sermon during the funeral of late Bishop Joseph Danlami Bagobiri in March 2018, Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah shared the results of findings by the Kukah Centre, that there are no communal clashes between the Hausa and Fulani communities in Southern Kaduna, but that externally based forces have recruited some local Fulani and non-Fulani agents and use them to collect information and then attack the communities. Fulani herdsmen and local farmers had low-level conflicts without the use of sophisticated weapons, and were able to settle them. This is clearly not the case now, and dialogue has failed because the so-called herdsmen violate any agreement and treat peace moves with

disdain. Dialogue under these conditions will not work because those funding and leading the terrorist attacks are neither involved in the talks, nor do they respect any agreements from such dialogue.

3. Those behind the transformation of the herdsmen and farmers conflicts into violent attacks on communities should be exposed. Nigerian government officials have been known to parrot the justification of the terrorist attacks by the Miyetti Allah and other “Fulani” apologists. The Nigerian government has shown its position through acts of commission and omission.

- (i) Quite often the Fulani militia give notice to their intended victims, who report such to the authorities without any action being taken.
- (ii) Some attackers caught during their operations and handed over to the security forces but nothing happens to them.
- (iii) Communities sometimes track attackers and report to the security forces, but they are not apprehended.
- (iv) The government announced several times that foreign mercenaries are the attackers, which means that they know them, but do nothing to stop them.
- (v) Government has negotiated with ISIS West Africa and with the Fulani militia, through intermediaries, and have even paid monies to the terrorist organizations. They cannot therefore claim that they do not know who the attackers are.
- (vi) Experts have stated that legally existing organizations provide support to the terrorists groups. If ordinary researchers can find this out, then the specialized security forces will know. They have to be persuaded to act on this knowledge and bring down the forces behind the terrorist groups.
- (vii) Organisations and groups that support or justify the terrorist violence have to be persuaded to stop doing so. Equally, those who have occupied lands through violence have to be removed from those lands, so that they will not be allowed to benefit from their crimes. Information presented above shows that some communities are beginning to organize to defend themselves, and to immediately return to their settlements “in order to avoid Fulani occupation”. This gravitation

towards self-help will produce a real armed conflict in the Nigerian Middle Belt unless steps are taken to stop the violent attacks on communities.

4. Attacks on churches have tended to paint the violence in religious terms. This is deliberate in order to convert the crisis into a religious conflict. Christian groups are now mobilizing to “confront jihadists”, which is a wrong way to interpret the on-going violent campaigns by the terrorist groups. This narrative should not be allowed to develop and contribute to turning the violence into a religious conflict.
5. Cattle rustling must be rapidly brought to an end. This has become the excuse used to launch attacks on peaceful communities whose members know nothing about cattle stealing. The international community should offer technical assistance to the Nigerian government in tracking the groups behind the cattle rustling and the use of its proceeds for financing terrorism.
6. The Nigerian government should be persuaded by the international community to handle the Fulani terrorists in the same way as the Boko Haram and their ISIS allies.
7. Arguments of neutrality by the Nigerian security forces are part of the ideological confusion to give false impression that the conflicts are “communal” and should therefore be rejected by the international community. It appears as if the Nigerian military believes there is a war between two parties, and they show their neutrality by not stopping the conflict, the logical conclusion being that the combatants should be allowed to the finish and let the stronger win. This is a curious way for the armed forces to shirk their constitutional responsibilities of maintaining peace within the borders of Nigeria. Since the armed forces have stated that there are foreign fighters involved, are they saying that the Nigerian security forces should not combat the foreign combatants? The documented charges of bias against the Nigerian armed forces contradict their claim of neutrality. What would happen if the various communities were to organize and take the fight to the Fulani? As some of the communities are already returning to prevent Fulani occupation of their lands, all efforts should be done to avoid a situation where the dispersed people are compelled to resort to self help.
8. There are suggestions from the National Assembly that a Special Reconstruction Fund should be set up to rehabilitate the victims and communities, as has happened with the victims of Boko Haram attacks. This is a fund that the international community can

contribute to. It is strongly recommended that organizations of the communities should be used to identify the beneficiaries, as well as to organize the distribution and delivery of relief materials and rehabilitation of destroyed public and community assets. Those dispersed should be brought back to their communities to reoccupy their lands, rebuild their homes and commence their farming and other economic activities.

9. It has been argued that grazing reserves should be created for the Fulani, from which they would migrate and return in their nomadic movements. While this may work, there are several strong arguments against this. The revival of existing grazing reserves will only enable the local Fulani elite to take over the grazing reserves and convert them to private property, as has been happening in several grazing reserves. Secondly, nomadism is not a sustainable method of livestock production, following rapid population growth and expansion of crop farming in most areas of the northern states. The Fulani and other livestock producers have to transform to ranching, and adopt agricultural systems based on combinations of animal production and crop production. Seasonal migrations are simply not sustainable. Taking over farmer lands for grazing reserves would only lead to more violence. A suggestion by the Nigerian Livestock Projects Division that grazing reserves should be established first in Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, Yobe, Bauchi, Kano and Niger should be taken seriously. Taking land from the Middle Belt communities is very likely going to generate more violence in the various states. Grazing reserves can only be seen as a temporary measure.
10. Lands around dams should be used to develop grazing resources for local Fulani living in those areas. This should reduce the level of nomadic movements in the northern states. When the Middle Belt reaches saturation point from north-south and south-north population movements, new areas of conflict would likely emerge. Hence, all the northern states should develop feedstuffs for the cattle in their areas instead of pushing them off to other regions.
11. The Kaduna State Peace and Reconciliation Committee recommended that Sahelian countries in West Africa should convene several meetings on the Fulani problem, but this has not been done. Such conferences should be convened after experts have studied the issues involved. These conferences should address the influx of Fulani from other West

African countries into Nigeria. Sources of guns and other firearms should be discussed with a view to breaking the gun-running networks operation in the sub region.

12. The international community needs to send fact-finding missions to Nigeria to speak with members of the affected communities. This will not only reassure the affected communities, it will give the international community first hand information so that there will be evidence based interventions.
13. As suggested by Senator Makarfi, efforts at dialogue should be organized between communities and local resident Fulani in order to stop the recruitment of local Fulani youth into the terrorist networks, and to establish bases for cooperation in confidence building measures in the various areas where the violence has been intense.

A survey reveals that the myriads of studies, investigations, committee reports, expert group presentations, publications and policy briefs by development agencies and academic publications on the so-called “Fulani problem” are plentiful in Nigeria. There does not appear to be anyone in government keeping track of them, and sieving them for policy options and interventions that could be utilized to build sustainable peace based on human rights and justice. Decisions must be taken about the available options, the actions that Middle Belt Communities and Stakeholders can take and pursue. The mode of implementing chosen interventions should be articulated in practicable work plans.