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Press release

Former Deputy Governor of Bank of Nigeria Threatened for Exposing Truth Behind Middle Belt Massacres

Obadiah Mailafia Faces State Harassment and Death Threats after Radio Interview

Dr. Obadiah Mailafia, the former Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, has been forced to take extraordinary security precautions after receiving death threats and being repeatedly interrogated by national security officers. The threats come after Dr. Mailafia publicly challenged official narratives about the widespread murder and displacement of civilians in Nigeria's Middle Belt.

In a [radio interview](#) given on 10 August, Dr. Mailafia reported that the devastating attacks by Islamist Fulani militias against the indigenous, predominantly Christian farming communities of the Middle Belt are part of a political project and have taken on genocidal proportions. The ultimate goal, Mailafia claimed, is to drive the indigenous people off their ancestral land and transform the Middle Belt into grazing land for the Fulani herdsmen. Mailafia believes that Nigeria's delicate political balance would be tipped decisively in favour of militant Islamism should this project succeed. Mailafia crossed a political red line by stating that the perpetrators receive material and political support from elements within the Nigerian state. "The government has a hand in the killings," he said. "No doubt about it."

Dr. Mailafia rejected the narrative commonly recited by Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari, as well as Western media and policy analysts, that the Middle Belt killings are a clash over land use between "farmers and herdsmen", aggravated by climate change. "Those who use this kind of language are accessories to genocide," he said. "What is happening is a continuation of jihad. The aim is to wipe out the people and take over their land."

Dr. Mailafia's high profile adds to the gravity of these accusations. Born in the Middle Belt in Kaduna State, Dr. Mailafia is a prominent Nigerian development economist, who served as the deputy governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria from 2005 to 2007, and as the chief of staff of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States in Brussels from 2010 to 2015. In 2019, he ran for president of Nigeria as the candidate of the African Democratic Congress party.

Soon after his radio interview, Dr. Mailafia began receiving death threats and warnings of plots against him within the security establishment. He has been detained and interrogated multiple times by Nigerian security forces, and his release from detention was made conditional on signing a pledge of silence. Fearing for his life and freedom, he has now made the decision to keep his whereabouts unknown.

Levels of violence committed by the Fulani militias in the Middle Belt now rival that of the far better known terrorist group Boko Haram. Fulani extremists were responsible for most of Nigeria's terror-related deaths in 2018, not to mention the displacement of 300,000 people, according to the Global Index of Terrorism (2019).

Christian Solidarity International (CSI) condemns the harassment of Dr. Mailafia and calls on Nigerian officials to cease their persecution and intimidation of critical voices. Alarmed by the rise in sectarian related violence in Nigeria, Christian Solidarity International issued a [Genocide Warning](#) in January 2020, and has called on the Permanent Members of the UN Security Council to fulfil its obligations under the 1948 Genocide Convention.

John Eibner, the president of Christian Solidarity International, commented, "Dr. Obadiah Mailafia has described the reality of the unfolding ethnic and religious cleansing in southern Kaduna State and the Middle Belt. He is now paying a heavy price for speaking the truth."

Christian Solidarity International is an international human rights organization campaigning for religious liberty and human dignity. It has been providing material aid to Nigerians affected by terrorist violence since 2013, and publishes a website devoted to the Nigerian conflict – www.nigeria-report.org.

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