

ENOUGH OF THE BLOODSHED: THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF KAFANCHAN, KADUNA STATE, NORTH WEST, NIGERIA SPEAKS



PREAMBLE

We, the Clergy, Religious and Laity of the Catholic Diocese of Kafanchan, welcome you to the Cathedral of St Peter Clavers. We are here to present to the world, the pains, agony and sorrows that have befallen us in this part of the State, the Southern Senatorial Zone of Kaduna State. Unfortunately, this crisis of tremendous proportion is happening at the time when, our Chief Shepherd, Most Rev Joseph Bagobiri is far away, outside the shores of this country attending to his health. This is the time when Southern Kaduna looks up to him for leadership. But he is not here. God knows why. The entire Presbyterium, Religious, the Laity and indeed the entire Southern Kaduna indigenes are united in prayers for him. May God heal him speedily and bring him back to the Diocese soonest.

In the last weeks and months, we have become victims of systematic attacks orchestrated by another version of Boko Haram, who also go by the name 'Fulani Herdsmen'. This Militia, of the Fulani extraction is bent on pursuing an agenda that is aimed at subjugating the Southern Kaduna People, disintegrating the country, weakening the Gospel and grounding completely the social and economic life of our people. Suffice to State *ab initio*, that Southern Kaduna is no stranger to violence, perpetrated against it by Jihadists. The first known recorded violence of a large scale dates as far back as 1987 when a group of Muslim youth unleashed violence on Christians during a Revival organized by the Christian students of the College of Education, Kafanchan. The charge was that a certain Pastor was quoting from the Bible and the Quran to press home his point. This infuriated the Muslim students who interpreted this as blasphemy and consequently unleashed terror on the Christian students. This attack, naturally spiraled and there was a backlash as reprisal attacks were carried out across the length and breadth of the state. In between the 1987 crisis and now, we have had some other attacks that were masterminded by our Muslim neighbors who have developed a penchant for war and hatred for peace. Suffice to mention in passing the Zangon Kataf crisis in 1992 and the 2011 post election crisis that claimed the lives of many people in Southern Kaduna. The events of the past weeks and months are unfortunate and further confirm that there is a hidden agenda targeted at the Christian Majority of Southern Kaduna. This Jihad is well funded, well planned and executed by agents of destabilization. Thus, our voice is like that of the one at Ramah that refused to be consoled (Jeremiah 31:15). We are however assured by the words of Christ that not a hair of our head will be lost (Luke 21:18).

For the records, Southern Kaduna Senatorial District is made up of Eight (8) Local Government areas: Sanga, Jema'a, Kaura, Jaba, Zangon Kataf, Kagarko, Kachia, and Kauru. These Local governments are densely populated by Christians. This land, fertile and agrarian, is blessed with adequate rainfall enough to make our crops yield bounteously. The beautiful hills and valleys are a sight to behold. It is this beautiful gift of God to the people of Southern Kaduna that our adversaries seek to covet by employing terrorism in order to occupy. Our Land and Faith have become the envy of our traducers and persecutors. The gift of the Christian faith found a place in the hearts of our forefathers hundreds of years ago and today we can boast of a vibrant faith in Jesus Christ represented by the many denominations in Southern Kaduna and an army of Ministers of the Gospel who today have been elevated by God to various offices. It is a fact, that Southern Kaduna today is the ***oasis of vocations*** as 70% of the ministers of the Gospel from Kaduna state are of Southern extraction. This Faith and Gift, we are prepared to defend and guard even if it means dying for it. For who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Is it trials? Or persecution? Or the sword? Yet in all these, we are conquerors (Romans 8: 35).

There is no better time than now to present this press release. We have had different groups in Southern Kaduna draw the attention of the world and government at different times by way of press releases since the eruption of the crisis. Most of it came at the peak of the attacks. Ours providentially is coming now, and regrettably still, the attacks have not abated. As we speak, villages and communities are being attacked daily by this militia. The worst hit Local Governments are Jema'a, Sanga, Kaura, and Kauru.

THE ISSUES

What started like a minor misunderstanding between Fulani herdsmen and indigenous farmers was badly handled and it soon took a different turn for the worse. Our people are largely farmers. They depend on their farms for sustenance. Our Farmers will labor all year round to cultivate their farms. The Fulani herdsmen will deliberately walk their cows into their farmlands. The cows will naturally eat up the crops and destroy the farmlands. For families that depend on this, one can better imagine the negative impact. So when this happens, the farmer confronts the Fulani herdsmen to seek a peaceful resolution. Most times, this gesture is met with stiff resistance as the herdsmen would threaten the farmer or begins a violent fight. In most occasions, because the herdsmen are armed to the teeth, they deal a heavy blow to the local farmer that result in death. Tension mounts and the indigenes would want to avenge the death of their loved one. This is the story all around and 99% of the intractable conflict between farmers and herdsmen are traceable to this.

It is therefore worrisome to us when a faceless group known as ***Concerned Southern Kaduna Muslims*** seek to distort the facts by way of twisting and misrepresenting the account to put the minority Muslims of Southern Kaduna as the victims while the Christian majority are the aggressors. This is far from the truth! All the violence that took place in Southern Kaduna, hardly was any masterminded by the indigenes. Or how could you explain the importation of heavily armed militia to prosecute the war on behalf of the Fulani? The mere presence of this killer squad is enough evidence and indictment of the Fulani as the masterminds of these crises.

We present to you, in graphic details, statistics of the recent crisis in Southern Kaduna. Judge for yourselves and see who the aggressor is:

STATISTICS

| LG AREA | VILLAGES | NO. OF DEATHS | NO. OF INJURED | HOUSES/PROPERTY BURNT |
|-----------------------------------|---|---------------|--|--|
| JEMA'A TOTAL | Godogodo, Akwa, Ninte, G/Biyu, F/Hawa | 30 | 16 | 326 + Farmlands destroyed 50 -45 25 105 + 1 CHURCH 40 - 591 Houses + 1 Church |
| | Pasakori, Misisi | 20 | 15 | |
| | Mile 1 | - | 2 | |
| | Manyi Kanju | 10 | - | |
| | Antang | 15 | - | |
| | S/Gari Tafa | 6 | - | |
| | G/Waya | 1 | - | |
| | U/Ali | - | - | |
| | 13 | 82 | 33 | |
| | KAURU TOTAL | U/Rimi | A total No. of 34 people were killed in these villages | |
| U/Magaji | | | | |
| Kigam | | | | |
| Kitakum | | | | |
| Kishishio | | | | |
| 5 | 34 | | | |
| KAURA TOTAL | (Anturung) | 16 | - | Many houses in these villages were burnt as well as places of worship 220 houses were burnt, 6 Churches and 1 Primary School |
| | Mafang | 17 | - | |
| | Zilang | 1 | - | |
| | Telak | 8 | - | |
| | Adu | 13 | - | |
| | Danti | 5 | - | |
| | Mayit | 28 | - | |
| | Zangang | 13 | - | |

| | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|-----|------------------|-----------------------|
| | Kirim | 13 | - | |
| | Zadiem | | - | |
| | (Manchok) | | - | |
| | Me-kakpang | | | |
| | Me-kwai | | | |
| | Bondong | 250 | 15 | |
| | U/Gata | | | |
| | U/kaura | | | |
| | Manchok II | | | |
| | Tsokbwanu | | | |
| | U/Akuku | | | |
| | 17 | | | |
| | Kabamu | 37 | 3 | - |
| | Ankpong | 35 | - | - |
| | U/Bahago | 4 | - | - |
| | Kobin | 92 | 5 people missing | 2 houses, 7 shops |
| | Hayin Kwantu | 15 | | 85 houses, 5 Churches |
| | Nandu | 19 | - | - |
| | U/Haruna | 6 | - | - |
| SANGA | Ambe Sarki | 54 | - | 8 houses, 6 shops |
| TOTAL | Dogon Daji | 42 | - | 71 houses, 2 shops |
| | U/Pa'ah | 3 | - | 63 houses |
| | Ningo Kirya | 10 | - | - |
| | U/Rimi | 2 | - | - |
| | U/Ganye | 1 | - | 5 houses, 1 Church |
| | Kutal | 6 | - | 135 houses, 1 Church |

| | | | |
|---------------|------------|----------|---|
| F/Karshi Daji | 25 | - | 30 houses, 1 Car |
| Fadan Karshi | 62 | 1 | 9 houses, 2 Churches, 4 shops, 4 cars |
| Tattaura | 11 | - | - |
| U/Dauda | 18 | 1 | 15 houses |
| 18 | 442 | 9 | 408 Houses, 19 shops, 7 churches, 5 cars |

Key:

1. **Number of LGC's attacked: 5**
2. **Number of Villages attacked: 53**
3. **Number of deaths: 808**
4. **Number of injured: 57**
5. **Number of houses, shops, churches & other properties destroyed: 1,422 houses, 16 Churches, 19 shops, 1 primary school, 5 cars.**

Note:

A conservative estimate of farmlands destroyed, food stuff burnt is estimated at 5.5 billion Naira.

GOVERNMENT'S BIASES IN HANDLING THE CRISES AND OUR GRIEVANCES

The primary responsibility of government as enshrined in the constitution is the protection of life and property of citizens irrespective of ethnic and/or religious persuasion. Any breach of this fundamental principle of social contract contravenes the very reason for which the contract was entered into. Unfortunately, our government both at the Centre and State levels have failed woefully. If anything, government has shown outright partisanship in favor of the herdsmen to the disappointment of the majority Southern Kaduna indigenes and Christians. This is what lends credence to our earlier assertion and belief that there is a well planned Jihad against our people with the sole aim of conquering our people and occupying our land. We have been disappointed in the way the soldiers have been manipulated or railroaded to favor the Muslims. In most of these attacks, the military stands aloof and watches while our people are being massacred. The viciousness of these self styled Jihadists sends shivers into the spines of our traumatized people. In the Godogodo and Pasakori attacks for example, the military merely watched and supervised the burning of our homes. When the youth mobilized to repel the attackers, the soldiers deliberately blocked them from entering the town. The herdsmen and their ilk turned the towns into killing fields and killed mostly women, children and the elderly who couldn't run for cover. The level of barbarity was such that pregnant women got their wombs blown out and massacred before their children. And these innocent children were not spared either. This level of viciousness was never witnessed even in the brutal tyranny and regime of Adolf Hitler.

What is most intriguing is the level of sophistication of weapons; Ak 47, Machine Guns and many other deadly instruments of death were freely used. Some questions readily come to mind and need answers:

1. Who are those behind these attacks?
2. How do they get their funding?
3. Who supplies these arms to these terrorists?
4. In Birnin Gwari, the Fulanis themselves have come under heavy attacks by cattle rustlers. It didn't take the government of El Rufai time to figure out what to do. Within the shortest possible time, soldiers were deployed and many of the cattle rustlers and bandits were either killed or arrested and cows in their hundreds were rescued. This is commendable and we are happy that the Fulanis in Birnin Gwari have been rescued from these bandits. If the government can deploy helicopters and soldiers to Birnin Gwari to help in tracking down the terrorists, why is the same government unwilling to deploy the same soldiers and helicopters to Southern Kaduna to help flush out the Fulani herdsmen terrorizing indigenes of Southern Kaduna? Why is government silent and not proactive in the face of these attacks?

OUR PRAYERS/DEMANDS

We unequivocally make the following demands:

1. Immediate cessation of hostilities by the warring parties.
2. A commission of inquiry be put in place to look into the remote and proximate causes of this crisis. Membership must be evenly drawn between both parties.
3. All perpetrators and sponsors of these evil must be fished out and punished accordingly no matter how highly placed.
4. We demand immediate release of Southern Kaduna youth and leaders unjustly detained by various security agencies for trumped up charges.
5. Provision of relief materials to victims of the attacks in Southern Kaduna be made a priority.
6. Compensation to all families that suffered losses of dear ones and properties.
7. Communities overrun by Fulani herdsmen and now under occupation by same must be vacated and their owners returned to their homes and farmlands immediately.
8. That the governor of Kaduna state, immediately retracts the tweet he sent some time ago wherein he wrote "anyone who kills a Fulani man takes a loan repayable in no distant future" We view this reckless statement as a tacit support of the herdsmen which emboldens them against the indigenous farmers. The life of indigenous farmers is equally precious, sacred, and sacrosanct.
9. We reject Gov El Rufai's proposal of spending N100,000,000 (One Hundred Million Naira only) to repair/renovate burnt places of worship. We suspect the motives and question the sincerity of such moves. Rather a comprehensive list of families that suffered losses be given expedited attention by way of assistance to rebuild their homes and return to them.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we call on Southern Kaduna indigenes to remain steadfast in prayer, united, strong and never to cave in to the antics of our adversaries. Tribe and denominational differences shouldn't put a chasm between us.

Let us remain focused and vigilant. St Peter admonishes us to "***be alert, be on the watch! Your enemy the devil roams round like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Be firm in your faith and resist him, because you know that your fellow believers in all the world are going through the same kind of sufferings. But after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who calls you to share his eternal glory in union with Christ, will himself perfect you and give you firmness, strength, and a sure foundation. (1 Peter 5:8-10)***". God watches over his children and He will continue to protect us.

We welcome our Fulani neighbors who are desirous of living in peace with their host communities. We encourage both the Southern Kaduna indigenes and our Fulani visitors to tow the path of peace and eschew violence. We however reserve the right for self defense in the face of attacks brought against us by any unjust aggressor. The principle of self defense is not alien to our teaching. We have a sacred duty and obligation to protect the life God has given us. This right is inalienable!

Southern Kaduna indigenes are peace loving People. We welcome any such good initiative by government aimed at bringing development and equitable distribution of wealth to all citizens of the state. We abhor any attempt to regard our people as second class citizens.

Any such attempt to forcefully take over our lands under any guise will be resisted. Our Fulani brothers, like their indigenous compatriots, should seek better and modern ways of promoting their business. This should not be at the detriment and expense of our people.

We are for peace. We are for equal rights. We are for justice. We are for development.

God bless Nigeria!

God bless Kaduna State!

God bless Southern Kaduna!

Signed:

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Chancellor Vicar General JDPC Chairman

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Source: THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF KAFANCHA

Published: Saturday, December 10, 2016