

# In Defence of God and Religion: A Historical Analysis of Killings in God's Name in Nigeria since c. 1980 A.D.

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## Abstract

Religious violence, championed by some religious sects, have been a major threat to national security in Nigeria since the 1980. Some of these includes: Maitatsine crisis in Kano, 1980, Bullum-Kutu 1982, Maiduguri 1982, Yola, 1984, Ilorin 1984, Bauchi 1984, Ilorin 1987, Kano 1984, Kafanchan 1987, Zuru 1980, Birnin Kebbi 1990, Katsina 1991, Tafawa Balewa 1991, Kano 1991, Jalingo 1992, Kaduna Polytechnic 1992, Kasuwar Magani (Kaduna) 1994, Gure Kahugu 1987, Kafanchan 1987, 1999, Kaduna since 1987, Jos 2001, Kano 2001 (against the US decision to invade Afghanistan in 2001), Tafawa Balewa (since 2000), Nasarawa 2001, the Danish Cartoon incidence 2005, Jos since 2001, Damaturu, 2011, Boko Haram siege since 2009 among others. This most often has led to reprisal attacks in other parts of the country. The reason put forward by some of these sects for such violence is that they are doing it in defense of God and the sanctity of their religion. The result has always been the destruction of lives and properties, with the major religions in the country (Christianity and Islam) bearing huge casualty. This paper therefore seeks to carry out a historical analysis of destructions of lives and properties carried out in the name of God in Nigeria since c.1980.

**Keywords:** God, Religion, Religious Violence, Nigeria

## Introduction

Before the country attained independence and the incursion of the military into the political scene, most of the conflicts in the country were in form of political thuggery, that is gangsters of the different political parties attempting to prevent, if necessary, by forcefully opposing political parties from conducting election campaigns in the areas they regarded as the area of jurisprudence (Usman, Y.B, 2002). However from the late 1970s up to the 1980s, the situation changed to outright violence leading to massive killings and destruction of properties starting with the Maitatsines. The Maitatsines has therefore been described as the opener of the gate way for religious crises, as after the Maitatsine Uprising in Kano, several other violent outbursts/religious riots began to follow sequentially. These included the Bullum-Kutu (Maitatsine) October 1982, Rigasa (Kaduna) 1982, Jimeta-Yola; Gombe (Bauchi state) 1984. Similarly, Hussaini Abdul (nd) wrote thus;

*Since the 1980s, Ethnic and Religious crises have become a re-occurring decimal in Northern Nigeria. There is virtually no state out of the 19 states that constitute the Northern Nigeria that crisis of this nature has not raised its ugly head. Since the middle 1980 the spate of violence has continued to increase. Among these includes: Maitatsine crisis in Kano, 1980, Bullum-Kutu 1982, Maiduguri 1982, Yola, 1984, Ilorin 1984, Bauchi 1984, Ilorin 1987, Kano 1984, Kafanchan 1987, Zuru 1980, Birnin Kebbi 1990, Katsina 1991, Tafawa Balewa 1991, Kano 1991, Jalingo 1992, Kaduna Polytechnic 1992, Kasuwar Magani (Kaduna) 1994, Gure Kahugu 1987, Kafanchan 1987, 1999, Kaduna 2000 Jos 2001, Kano 2001, Tafawa Balewa (since 2000), Nasarawa 2001. Others include Chamba-Kuteb crisis in Taraba state since 1975 Tiv-Jukun crisis, Bassa-Igbira crisis in Toto and a host of others. While these crises continue to exhibit ethnic and religious colorations, and portray clear manifestation of criminality and frustration resulting from sociological and economic alienation coming from wide spread poverty and unemployment, there are other forces whose identity and character are difficult to define. Many people lost their lives as a result of these crises, some sustained injuries of various degrees, some had their properties worth millions of Naira either destroyed or looted; yet others get permanently dislocated and psychologically depressed. These crises have created a general threat to the security of the citizens, it has resulted in the violation of the rights of citizens. Many people "either through miscarriage of justice or through the failure of the state to prosecute perpetrators and instigators of these clashes" have been unjustly treated*

It is therefore obvious that after attaining independence, the spirit with which the people fought and gained was relegated to the background. The Nigerian area thus transformed to a fertile ground for various and varied forms of "religious uprisings".

For a meaningfully discuss genocide in the name of religion as it affects Nigeria, it is pertinent to have a thorough grasp of what religion is all about, especially as it relates to the situation in Nigeria. It is rather unfortunate that religion has been misconstrued in the Nigerian context as well as many African countries. For those of us in Nigeria, it is gradually becoming a tool for manipulation, mischief, bondage, violence and destruction. For us in the academia, especially in the humanities, the general outlook of religion among the

people is making it a bit difficult to critically discuss religion without stepping on toes. In this way, religion which would have acted as catalyst for human and societal development is gradually drawing the nation backward.

The above notion is based on the fact that an analysis of the rate and frequency of religious uprisings in the country leading to violence and massive loss of lives and properties is alarming and can without exaggeration be attributed to number of causes (Ozekhome, M,2003, Analysis,2003). Most of these are often garbed as religious, ethnic or both. However, recent findings have revealed that underlining most of the ethno-religious conflicts are economic and political crises (Fadahusi,A, 2003). Describing this frequency in the so called Religious Crises, the Commission of Inquiry into the Religious Disturbance in Bulum-Kutu area of Maiduguri, in October 1982 noted thus

*There were countless religious movements which even though under the cover of some religious tags, are either nothing more than dangerous cults, or puppets in the hands of some religious zealots who are manipulating them for selfish ends*

### **Conceptual Definition and Clarification**

Nigeria is located in the western corner of Africa. Nigeria is often referred to as the “Giant of Africa”. This is perhaps with reference to her population which dwarfs other nations’ populations in Africa. In terms of human and material resources, it also surpasses other African countries, on the face value. Nigerian is the tenth most populous country in the world and the largest in sub-Sahara Africa. Nigeria is one of the fastest growing nations in the world. Presently, the United Nations Population Commission estimated the Nigerian population to be about 170million (Africa is said to have 1 billion people) (FRCN, 2011). The percentage of each ethnic group in the national total is the subject of intense political contestation. Virtually all post-colonial censuses have produced contested results. The 1963 census gives an idea of the 12 largest ethnic groups in Nigeria. The 3 ethnic majority groups make up about 54 percent of the population (Bangura, nd). Agheyisi (1984) and Mustapha (2003) both argue that there are ‘about 400’ language groups in Nigeria and suggests that, minus the 9 largest groups, the remaining 390 languages are spoken by 20 percent of the population, with over 300 ‘minor’ languages spoken by only 7 percent of the population. The numerical and political preponderance of the three majority ethnic groups and the tendency for many ethnic minority groups to cluster politically, linguistically and culturally, around the big three have given Nigeria a tripolar ethnic characteristic

On the otherhand, the word religion is derived from the Latin noun *religio*, which denotes both earnest observance of ritual obligations and an inward spirit of reverence. In modern usage, religion covers a wide spectrum of meanings that reflect the enormous variety of ways the term can be interpreted. At one extreme, many committed believers recognize only their own tradition as a religion, understanding expressions such as worship and prayer to refer exclusively to the practices of their tradition. At the other extreme, religion may be equated with ignorance, fanaticism, or wishful thinking.

Religion in this understanding includes a complex of activities that cannot be reduced to any single aspect of human experience. It is a part of individual life but also of group dynamics. Religion includes patterns of behavior but also patterns of language and thought. It is sometimes a highly organized institution that sets itself apart from a culture, and it is sometimes an integral part of a culture. Religious experience may be expressed in visual symbols, dance and performance, elaborate philosophical systems, legendary and imaginative stories, formal ceremonies, meditative techniques, and detailed rules of ethical conduct and law. Each of these elements assumes innumerable cultural forms. In some ways there are as many forms of religious expression as there are human cultural environments.

In his analysis, Pratt (1947) described Religion as the attitude of a self towards an object in which the self genuinely believes. It is the serious and social attitude of individuals or communities towards the power or powers which they conceive as having ultimate control over their interest and destinies. The attitude according to the scholar must not be mechanical or coldly intellectual. He went further to argue that it must have some faint touch of that social quality which we feel in our relations towards anything that can make response to us.

Kant (Idowu, 1973) sees religion as the belief which sets what is essential in all adoration to God in human morality. Religion is the law in us, in so far as it obtains emphasis from a law giver and judge over us. It is morality, directed to the recognition of God. In line with Kant’s thinking, Schleiermacher posited that religion can only be interpreted, understood and explained when seen in the light of the universe in its uninterrupted activity, and at every moment revealing itself to the human being.

From the above definition, it is clear that religion is part and parcel of the human society, since his life revolves around belief in one object or the other, and the effectiveness of the object to his day to day survival. It is in an attempt to be faithful to the tents of their various beliefs, that some sects in Nigeria are today caught in the dangerous web of killing others in the name of God, which is fast becoming a daily occurrence in the society.

## Christianity and Islam in History

In an attempt to make a historical analysis of Christian's/Islam's relationship in Nigeria, there is the need to have a historical survey of how these two religions have fared in history, as this will give us a clearer picture of some of the reasons why the relationship has taken the position it is maintaining today.

According to a Radio Nigeria (2012), Eid El Malud analysis, the relationship between Christianity and Islam had not always been that of the cat and mouse palavers as practiced today. This according to the analysis is based on historical tie with sees each coming to the aid of the other in times of trouble. It argued that at a certain period, at the peak of persecution, Prophet Muhammad had to send some of his followers to take refuge in Abyssinia, which was under the ruler ship of a Christian King. Abbas F,(2010), argued that in recognition of Jesus Christ as his predecessor, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) signed a charter with some Christian representatives in the year 628CE, which in his view is still relevant today, representing cordial relationship between the two major religions. In his analysis, he posited that in that year (628CE), a Christian delegation from St. Catharine's Monastery went to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to seek the protection of the Islamic government under his command. The objective was to feel secure against the aggression of the Persian Empire using the rising Islamic power as amour (St. Catherine's Monastery is the world's oldest monastery located at the foot of Mt. Sinai which has a huge collection of the Christian manuscripts second only to those of the Vatican and it is known as a world heritage site. In response to the request of the Christians cited above, prophet Muhammad (SAW) granted them a charter of rights as follows.

*"This is a message from Muhammad son of Abdullah serving as a covenant to those who adopt Christianity, near and far that we (Muslims) are with them. Verily, I and all the servants of God, as the helpers of Islam hereby make promise to defend Christians because they are my citizens and by God! I hold out against anything that displeases them. No compulsion is to be on them (concerning their way of worship). Neither are their judges to be removed from their jobs nor their monks from their monasteries. No one should destroy a house of their religion or damage it or loot it whoever violate this breached God charter and disobeyed His Apostle. Verily, Christians are my allies and have my secure charter against all they hate. No one should force them to fight for a course in which they have no belief or compel them to migrate against their wish. Neither is the sacredness of their covenant to be violated nor their Churches to be disrespected. And if any damage should happen to their Churches, they must not be prevented from repairing them. No Muslim should disobey this covenant till the last Day (end of the world).*

By this charter, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) asserted that Muslims and Christians were brethren in faith and no one of them should fight against the other on basis of religion. And by validating the charter till the great Day of Judgment, the Prophet had precluded and future attempt to revoke the privileges therein by any nation, group or individuals. By implication, those privileges are inalienable. A remarkable aspect of the charter is that it did not stipulate any condition for those Christians to enjoy the privileges. Believing that being followers of Jesus Christ was enough a condition, the Prophet had assumed that the Christians, as people of the Books, would surely reciprocate this unprecedented gesture wherever they coexist with Muslims not only by tolerating the latter's mode of worship and way of life but also by refraining from any act of provocation against them which could advertently or inadvertently precipitate religious rancor. Another noticeable aspect of the charter is the Prophet's silence on any payment by the protectorate Christians, which was the practice in those days.

Commenting on the above, scholars are of the view that the prophet was able to demonstrate this act because prior to that event many revelation had come into the Qur'an acknowledging the divine mission of all the Prophets before Muhammad (SAW) including that of Jesus Christ. And because of those revelations, no Muslim can claim to be a true Muslim without accepting Jesus the Son of Mary as a prophet of God and a Messiah. One of those revelations as contained in Quran.2:258 says.

*The Apostle of Allah (Muhammad SAW) believes in what was revealed to him and so do the entire faithful. Every one of them believes in Allah, His Angels, His Books and His Apostles. We do not discriminate against any of His Apostles. They say, "We hear and obey (the laws brought by those Apostles). Grant us your forgiveness Oh Lord! To you we shall all return..."*

Another verse of the Qur'an (Quran 2:256) states

*There is no compulsion in religion. True guidance has become distinct from stray. Whoever renounces evil and believes fully in God has grasped the most reliable chord that never breaks. God is all-hearing, all knowing*

Another instance of cordiality, was demonstrated during the reign of the second Caliph, who in upholding that charter (Caliph, Umar Bin Khattab) refused to observe salat inside the Church of Jerusalem when he visited the area following the liberation of that region by the Islamic State from the Persian Empire which religion was Zoroastrianism (worship of fire). The Church had been cleared by Muslim soldiers for the observance of Salat which Umar, as Head of State, was to lead. But when it was time, he ordered the soldiers to find another place for Salat and keep the Church intact for the Christians saying he would not do that which the prophet prohibited. He then warned the Muslims who accompanied him never to convert Church into Mosque

for that would be a bad precedent capable of breaching the prophet's charter with Christians (Abbas, 2010). This demonstrates completely the spirit of tolerance among adherents of the two major religions.

### **Nigeria and Religious Tolerance Before Independence.**

Apart from the hostility which is recorded to have taken place during the attempt to Islamize some parts of Nigeria during the jihad of Uthman bin Dan Fodio from about c.1804 and the resistance to the colonialists during the period of colonialization, available literatures have argued that the different peoples which today constitute Nigeria (prior to the coming of the colonialists), although had conflicts, were able to manage it in such a way that there was a greater level of peaceful co-existence and symbiotic relations. The fact that the religion of Islam abhors violence was emphasized by Muhammad al- Kánemí (d. 1838), the ruler of Kanem-Borno who challenged the heirs of the *mujáhid*, 'Uthmán dan Fodio (d.1817), with regard to the use of the sword for religious ends. Al-Kánemí posited the sword is too rough-and-ready a weapon to use in settling religious questions, especially questions between Muslims themselves, since they would attempt to resolve by *force majeure* what might be substantial matters of theology, or even only differences of opinion. He insisted that Muslims must either settle for tolerance and mutual acceptance or else unleash a smoldering permanent war that would exempt, in his words, not even "Egypt, Syria and all the cities of Islam...in which acts of immorality and disobedience without number have long been committed. Al Kanemi argued further thus,

*"No age and country is free from its share of heresy and sin, and any inflexible division of the world between dár al-Islám and dár al-harb would fly in the face of this reality and reduce to ashes all sincere but inadequate attempts at truth and obedience.*

Sanneh Lamin (1997) posited thus

*Given religious teaching about the sanctity of human life, war as the taking of life becomes necessarily a moral issue. In the Muslim tradition, jihad forces the moral issue of war to the forefront by predicating it on religious grounds, with stringent conditions, cautions, rules and remedies against indiscriminate use of it. It is, accordingly, typical in jihád situations that there is considerable intellectual debate about undertaking it, for war is no light matter either for society or for the conscience. Where people pay the ultimate sacrifice, it is important that military ends are constrained by ethical norms, and that religious teaching is not corrupted by entrepreneurial motives. War is as much a concern for the state as it is for religion, and in undertaking it, the state and religion are placed on the same moral foundation.*

In line with the above Olusanya and Ayandele posited that in pre colonial times there was free movement of people, goods and services in the area which today constitute the Nigerian territory. This is attested to by the exchange of arts and raw material as well as excellent trade network crisscrossing the various areas right from the interior of the south down to the north. The scholars argued that apart from the economic role the inter-state route links played, they also acted as medium through which religious, social and political ideas diffused. The scholars specifically pointed that while the new Emir of Bida, Maliki, had openly welcome influx of non-indigenes into his territory, the Emir of Nasarawa had written a letter to the Christian Bishop to open a station in Loko. They argued that it was this excellent relationship that existed up to the eve of colonial rule that both the jihadists and colonialists dismantle, so as to be able to achieve complete and total submission of the people through the establishment of segregated settlements (Sa'ad A, 2010).

### **Nigeria from the Period c. 1980**

Available historical document as it relates to the history of religious uprising and destruction in Nigeria posits that this could be better understood when traced to the rising level of corruption among politicians (especially from the period of oil boom in the 1970's) and the disappointment among the people of some of these leaders whom some of them had hitherto regarded as spiritual and highly religious. They people had sought various means of either overthrowing the government or on the alternative create a condition for themselves where they could practice a religious state free from corruption, returning to the period promised by the Quran and the Jihadists. They were however encouraged by the success of armed Taliban group which rose against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The success of this group in forcing the Russians out of their country was deemed a fit to be copied by those against foreign occupation. In the case of Nigeria, there began the emergence of some groups which felt they could do the same in the country. This is contained in the intelligence report of the period, which revealed the infiltration of Nigeria by foreign Islamic fundamentalists. Popular among this group was a renowned Islamic scholar and leader of a popular Islamic school believed to have escaped arrest in either troubled Sudan or the war-ravaged Afghanistan. The unidentified Islamic scholar took refuge in Nigeria for eight months. It was also reported that it was because of this that Alhaji Musa, who according to report sheltered the Islamic scholar in Katsina was later arrested alongside his guest by security agents. The police swooped on Musa's residence in Katsina in anticipation of getting incriminating evidence in connection with the expatriate. However, the group had succeeded in stirring up sentiment among some other groups, one of such which later



became known as Maitatsine, a religious sect was founded by late Malam Muhammadu Marwa alias Allah Ta-Tsine. This was to mark the beginning of trouble for the people of the federation. This religious sect was opposed to most aspects of modernization and to all Western influence. The group unleashed acts of terrorism against the state. The sect also decried such technological commonplace as radios, wrist watches, automobiles, motorcycles, and even bicycles. Those who use these things or who read books other than the Qur'an were viewed as hell-bound.

The group under the name "Maitatsine", (which means 'one who curses') attracted a large crowd of followers among which the tallakawa (commoners) referred to as Yan Tatsine (those who curse). The activities of Maitatsine and his followers became a threat and a source of worry to the people of Kano to the extent that Governor Abubakar Rimi issued a letter on November 26, 1980 giving the sect two weeks to quit Kano state. On December 18, 1980 the sect launched attacks on police formations, government establishments, Churches, Christians and moderate Muslims. On December 18 1980, the Maitatsine group went to "Shahuci" (a popular open field) to preach when the police stormed the place to prevent the sect from preaching because they did not obtain a permit. Moreover, the public had always complained of harassment by the sect whenever it was preaching. Conflict ensued between the police and the sect. Obviously, the police underrated the strength of the sect and the two police units that went for the operation were soon over-powered by the members of the sect who appeared with bows and arrows, knives and Dane guns. The sect burnt down all the thirteen police vehicles, killed four policemen and injured the rest whom they stripped off their weapons (see, Falola, 1998: 153).

Encouraged by the 'defeat' of the police, the sect marched in Kano city chanting "Yau zamu sha jinni", meaning "today we shall drink blood", in Hausa. By December 19, the sect took over strategic places in Kano city including the Fagge mosque, some schools, a cinema house and the Sabon Gari market. For eleven days, the police was unable to bring to control the sectarian riots. When the situation was getting out of control, ex-President Shehu Shagari had to invite the Nigeria Army to intervene. It took the army two days to dislodge the sect while their leader was killed in the operation. More than 1,000 members of the sect were arrested and detained in prison where they received agonizing treatment from the police. The crisis lasted for 11 days, claimed the lives of more than 4,179 people and hundreds of houses and shops were either torched or destroyed (Okafor, 1997; Isichei, 1987; Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry, 1981).

Thus the Kano incident stands out for being the first religious crisis that took a huge toll on human lives and property. Although there had been series of religious tensions and skirmishes across the country, one of which was the crisis witnessed in May 1980 in Zaria during which property belonging to mainly Christians were destroyed by some Muslims, few people could have imagined that differences in religion could lead to such wanton destruction of lives and property as witnessed in December 1980 (Kumolu, C, 2011). Gradually, Nigerian graduated from a land of peace to a fertile ground for various and varied forms of "religious uprisings". This is because of the rapidity with which other violent crises in the name of religion followed. These included the Bullum-Kutu (Maitatsine) October 1982, Rigasa (Kaduna) 1982, Jimeta-Yola; Gombe (Bauchi state) 1984. The table below gives a better picture of the Nigerian situation since c.1980.

### **Intra Religious Conflict**

Islam, just like other religious body has been characterized by sects, and it is the activities of these sects that have often led to sectarian crises, based on variation in belief and practice. The earliest known sects in Islam are perhaps the Sunni and the Shi'a (Shiites). Whereas the Sunni believe in integrating religion and society by adopting religion to state structures, the Shiites believe in religious Puritanism such that Islam must be practiced in its pure form and must be guarded from being adulterated by the society. There is also the controversy over the origin of their caliphs (representatives of the Prophet of Islam). Whereas the Sunni have designated family roots that would always produce the caliphs or imams, the Shi'a believe that the position of imam can even be earned by commoners who have excelled in religious teachings and traditions. Since the Sunni adopted religion to social structures, they also have accepted and respected political authority. In fact, Sunni leaders can function both as religious and political leaders. This variation till date is responsible for the continued Sunni and Shiites fratricidal wars in parts of the world.

In the case of Nigeria, some of the identified groups are the Derika, the Izala, the Kaulu (Kablu), the Muslim brothers, the Tijjaniya and the Quaddiriya, the Shiite, the Muslim Brotherhood, and several other splinter groups. The existence of these and their variation in the beliefs and practice of the religion has also been associated with clashes and conflict. In Zuru town of Kebbi State, in Northwestern Nigeria, serious violence over the control of the market (then central) mosque between the Derika and Izala sects occurred in 1987 for instance. It led to the closure of the mosque for several years and to this day, the two sects have separate mosques where they worship (Danjibo,nd,:5). Although the Maitatsine clash is recorded as one of the most violent intra religious clash, however, after that period others have occurred especially around specifically in the northern part of the country, with Kano area as the spot. This is because the Maitatsine episode did not pass without breeding offspring, one of which is the Yan tatsine (Children or followers of Maitatsine), who were to bred further intra

and inter religious crises in the area.

This situation of intra religious conflict was to come up again in 1992, when the Shiite sect in Kano broke away from the parent organization under Mallam Ibrahim El Zak-Zaky, a Zaria based Islamic scholar. The Kano group there after declared Mallam Zaky as their enemy and even physically assaulted him while he was preaching at a mosque at Bayero University Kano. The major grievance of the people of Kano was not actually the anti-establishment stance of the Shiite, (preaching against political corruption and held anti-establishment views, they also had a pathological hatred for the Nigerian police and the judiciary, (all of whom were considered to be instruments of the Satan they should be avoided); but the way they blasphemed some Caliphs and faithful of Allah, This in the view of the orthodox Muslims were heretic and insolent. This teaching pitched the Shiite against the government on the one hand and the Shiite and the Orthodox Muslims on the other. It was this that led to the detention of the leader of the group by the Federal government on account of activities considered inimical to public peace and order in the country (Olugboji, 1995:6).

Four years later (specifically in August, 1996), the peace of the northern part of Nigeria was again trouble. This was as a result of an open confrontation involving the Shiites and the *Yan tauri* (this was a local word, meaning the invulnerable). The confrontation resulted from the failed attempt by the orthodox Muslims around Adakawa quarters to prevent the Shiites from operating in the area. This emanated from the attempt of the Shiite to celebrate the Id -El Maulud, at Adakawa quarters. This worried the people who felt this could result in skirmish between the Shiite and other Muslim groups. They therefore denied the use of the area to the Shiites; on the other hand the fundamentalist swore to go ahead with their program. This angered the Yan tauri (the group was described thus, because they believe that they had native charms which made it impossible for weapons such as knives and guns to penetrate their bodies), who warned the Shiite to leave the area. The refusal of the Shiite to heed to the warning as they went ahead to hold their prayer at the ground, led to the disturbance that also got the attention of members of the Adakawa community against the Shiites. Although the police intervened, but this did not prevent a free for all fight between the two groups in which dangerous weapons were freely used (Olorunfewa 1996:10).

Obviously, not contented with the state intervention in the 1996 fracas, the Shiite launched another the following year on the occasion of the Eid el Fitr prayer at Kofan Mata. The bone of contention was that the Shiite felt the Orthodox Muslim were tolerant of the adulteration of Islam, especially as it relates to the position on political happenings around the area, which in their view were not in conformity with the Islamic teachings. The position of the Shiites is that as true Muslims the Orthodox Muslims should have taken up arms against the state, especially the administration of General Abacha and all those associated with him. As a way of registering their grievance, the Shiite vowed to prevent the Orthodox Muslims from using the prayer ground thus, blocking all entrances. They also made provocative statements about the political and religious leaders who in their own estimation misled their followers from practicing true Islam (Albert, 1999:288-9). Although, the police, intervened but this did not prevent the use of stones and bottles and other dangerous implements leading to the death of four fundamentalists and several others injured.

The above was to be followed by series of crises in other parts of the country, leading to massive destruction of lives and properties. For example, the 'Sharia'a' conflict of 2000 in Kaduna Metropolis gives a clear case of major breakdown of intergroup relations resulting in over one thousand two hundred and ninety five (1295) deaths and the destruction of over one thousand nine hundred and forty four (1944) houses, hotels, business premises, churches (123) and mosque (55) as well as seven hundred and forty six (746) assorted vehicles. It led to nearly half the population of Kaduna fleeing and the subsequent (unconscious) division of Kaduna metropolis into Muslim and Christian areas (Aliyu Y, 2007).

### **Inter Religious Conflict and escalated Religious Killings : Nigeria since 1999 A.D.**

Since the return of democratic rule in 1999, the country has been witnessing blood bath in the name of defending religion and fight for God. Although this happening is more around the Middle Belt of the country, but the impact is often felt in all parts of Nigeria. This is better appreciated when viewed in the light of The International Crises Group (ICG) 2010 Report, in which it argued thus;

*Conflicts between Muslims and Christians, or between ethnic groups strongly marked as either one or the other, have been the "most violent instances of inter-group crisis in Nigeria". Such violence is, of course, a major feature of the country's "middle belt", and especially Jos. In the region under consideration in this report, it has occurred more frequently in the central zone, at the convergence of Hausa-Fulani Muslims and non-Muslim groups, and almost entirely in urban centres (especially Kaduna, but also Kano and Bauchi) with large migrant populations.*

The above position becomes even more realistic, when viewed from the fact that in the year 2010 alone, there were cases of killing and maiming all in the name of religion by sects in the area. Beginning on January 16, 2010, several days of violence broke out in Dutse-Uku when Christian youth allegedly surrounded a Muslim

man attempting to rebuild his house, which had been destroyed in the November 2008 rioting, in an area that had become primarily Christian. The youth fought with the man and his workers; on January 17, 2010, it was allegedly in retaliation, Muslim youth attacked Christian worshippers leaving a church. By January 19, 2010, violence had spread to the Jos suburbs of Bukuru, Nasarawa Gwong, Tudun Wada, Katako, Kuru Jenta, and Angwan Rukuba. Assailants reportedly killed an estimated 150 persons and set houses ablaze, displacing approximately 3,000 persons.

On March 7, 2010, Fulani herdsmen attacked Dogon Nahawa, Zot, and Rassat villages in Jos South and Barkin Ladi LGAs, killing at least 500 persons including women, children, and babies, and displacing an estimated 800 persons. Survivors reported that Muslims in the three villages had received anonymous phone calls two days prior to the attack warning them to leave the area. Local newspapers had previously published the names of the Fulani killed in January with a Fulani promise to seek revenge. Ten days after (precisely on March 17, 2010), Fulani herdsmen reportedly attacked Byei village in Riyom LGA, killing approximately 12 persons, injuring several others and burning buildings. Christian mourners at a funeral for victims of an earlier attack in Dogon Nahawa assaulted a Hausa-Fulani radio reporter, destroyed his car and stole his equipment.

The Nigeria terrain continued to boil throughout April 2010 in what appeared to be a series of reprisal attacks. On April 4, 2010, a women's procession returning from Easter Mass passed through predominantly Muslim areas and were attacked by local youth; military personnel intervened and stopped the women from passing through other volatile areas. On April 6 three persons died in clashes between Christian and Muslim gangs in Jos. Six days later (April 12, 2010), suspected Muslim gangs burned the homes of three government officials, including a local government Chairman in a Christian village near Jos. On the same day, a Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN) pastor and his wife were killed by Muslim assailants in Bauchi State after his church in Bauchi had been burned, allegedly by Muslim refugees from Jos a few days after Christians displaced by the January violence had taken refuge in it. Authorities questioned the village head, but the perpetrators were not identified at the end of the reporting period. On April 25, 2010, the bodies of two Christian journalists for the Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN) were found after they had been intercepted by Muslim gangs on their way to interview a local politician. Reports indicate that after killing the two men, the assailants answered the journalists' phones when COCIN officials called, taking responsibility for the two deaths.

On April 26 2010, seven persons were reportedly killed near Jos; police arrested several suspects. On April 24, 2010, police in Bauchi State arrested 206 suspects travelling to Bauchi city for alleged possession of weapons including guns, knives, and bows and arrows. On April 20, 2010, Berom youth allegedly barricaded the road in Riyom LGA, stopped vehicles, and killed seven persons after interrogating passengers to ascertain their religious affiliation and ethnic identity. As a result Muslims in Plateau State advised all Muslims to avoid traveling on the federal highway in that area. On April 1, 2010, the country's authorities charged 20 persons with terrorism in connection with the violence in Plateau State in March 2010. More than 160 persons were arrested prior to the charges having been filed, and authorities announced their intention to charge 41 persons with terrorism in connection with the March violence, with the possibility of the death penalty for some arrested persons. In addition, 123 were charged with illegal possession of firearms.

The situation in the month of May, 2010, was not different, as the crisis claimed more casualties. This began with the May 22, 2010, when Christian Berom youth allegedly attacked Tusung village, 24 miles south of Jos, Plateau State. In this siege three persons were killed. Police arrested 15 suspects. On May 23, 2010, two persons reportedly died, and several others were injured, at a Muslim youth protest on Bauchi Road in Jos. The violence was allegedly ignited during the funeral procession to the Jos Central Mosque for those who were killed the previous day. In the same month (May 19, 2010), there was a clash in which Muslim Fulani youth in Kwasam, Kiru LGA, Kano State, allegedly burned a Baptist church and the pastor's home

On June 14, 2010, the Muslim communities in Jos South and Barkin Ladi LGAs filed a suit against Plateau State and the Police Service Commission for the damages inflicted on them during the January 2010 crisis in Jos. They claimed that statements made by the then-commissioner of police portrayed Muslim youth as the primary cause of the crisis. They demanded \$6.6 million (one billion naira) in compensation for damages. The case had yet to be scheduled in court at the end of the reporting period.

It is important to note that while Jos was experiencing clashes and counter clashes the adjoining States especially of Bauchi, Kano and Niger were not spared. For example, in August 2009, nine suspects were arraigned before the Suleja High Court in Niger State in connection with the June 2009 death of a local pastor. On June 17, 2009, there were clashes between Christians and Muslims north of Suleja, Niger State, after police released a man accused of stealing a cell phone from a Muslim man in the village of Gauraka. A local pastor reportedly spoke provocatively about the Muslim man who reported the theft to police. Muslims responded by attacking Christians, resulting in the pastor's death. Authorities responded to the spreading violence by closing schools and increasing security in the area.

In July 2009, violent clashes erupted in Bauchi, Borno, Kano, and Yobe states after supporters of an Islamic extremist group, "Boko Haram" ("Western Education is Forbidden"), attacked police stations and other

government facilities. The army restored order, but clashes between security forces and militants reportedly resulted in an estimated 700 deaths. Police and military in several states detained persons suspected of supporting Boko Haram and reportedly killed them. The military captured Maiduguri-based Boko Haram spiritual leader Muhammad Yusuf alive after a siege of his compound and turned him over to the police, whose colleagues the group had killed at the outset of the violence. A policeman summarily executed Yusuf in front of onlookers after parading him before television cameras. Many Boko Haram members remained incarcerated at the end of the reporting period. Nearly 700 suspects were reportedly arraigned in Maiduguri. At least three of the 77 suspected Boko Haram members standing trial for homicide were granted bail, and one died of illness.

On December 27, 2009, a clash in Zango, Bauchi State, between members of the Islamic group Maitatsine, also known locally as "Kala Kato," and the government security personnel resulted in 38 deaths and the destruction of several homes. The violence began after residents expressed concern about aggressive open-air preaching by the group's members, who questioned the crackdown by security forces against Boko Haram in July. Security personnel arrested 20 individuals, including 11 juveniles.

All these were cases of killing in the name of religion that continued in the region, but was further escalated by the activities of the Jama'atu Ahliss-Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad (Boko Haram). A situation which has presently taken the killing to another level, described as more sophisticated.

### **The Emergence of Jama'atu Ahliss-Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad and the Nigerian State**

The term "Boko Haram" comes from the Hausa word *boko* meaning "Animist, western or otherwise non-Islamic education" and the Arabic word *haram* figuratively means "sin" (literally, "forbidden"). Boko Haram opposes not only Western education, but Western culture and modern science as well.

According to adherents of Jama'atu Ahliss-Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad, their ideology is hinged on the writings of Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio, *Kitab al-farq* (Character of the old regime), in which he condemned what he described as the unislamic and ungodly practices of the kings of the old Hausaland, describing them unbelievers. (Hodgkins T, 1975). The group argued further that it is in line with this that it not only oppose Western education, but Western culture and modern science as well.

Sharing almost similar doctrinal outlook with the Shiite before them, the group argues that the present legal system of the Nigeria system does not conform to that of the Islamic world. They also posit that the present taxation/ banking system is shyllock as Islam forbids interest in financial transaction. They are completely against the constitution/laws of the land, which they describe as manmade, in replacement of the ones ordained by Allah (BBC, 2009).

In its attempt to reform the society, the group has asked for a total overthrow of the government, to be replaced with pure Islamic law. They have also ask that all should practice Islam and turned against those who (although Muslims) have not supported their course. In this way, they are bent on taking over the state by force. It was therefore not surprising that within the first few weeks of their campaign, they clashed with the state security apparatus. Thus between July 24 and 28, 2009 six Northern states; Borno, Bauchi, Yobe, Gombe, Kano and Katsina came under severe attack, during which massive destruction of lives and properties was witnessed.

### **Revolution or Reformation**

In what the Jama'atu Ahliss-Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad described as attempt to reform the society and the religion, the group have targeted structure and state apparatus which it sees as impediment at achieving this fit. The campaign began from the headquarters of the sect in Maiduguri after an explosion killed one person and wounded several others. As a way of stamping their authority, armed members of the sect stormed and attacked and burnt police stations, churches, mosques, prisons and government establishments. This attack took place almost simultaneously in Bauchi, Kano and Yobe states. Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state, was the worst hit leaving hundreds of people dead and several houses, churches and government properties burnt and destroyed. Churches that were targets of the violence in Maiduguri included the Celestial Church, the Eklesiyani Yan'Uwan Nigeria, the Deeper Life Bible church and several other evangelical churches. These were burnt and more than 30 vehicles were also burnt by the sect in the premises of the churches. The residence of the Commandant, Police Training College Maiduguri, was also razed to the ground by the sect. Also burnt and destroyed were five primary schools and the headquarters of the Universal Basic Education. In the neighbouring Yobe state, the town of Potiskum also suffered its share of the sectarian violence as churches, the headquarters of the Federal Road Safety Commission, a Police Command and the National Population Commission office as well as several vehicles were attacked and burnt by the sect (*Newswatch*, 2009: 33-35 & 43). In reaction against their mayhem and in protection of the citizenry, more than 500 members of the sect were killed by government security forces in Borno. In Bauchi state, 41 persons including a soldier and a police officer lost their lives, while in Yobe state 43 persons lost their lives with greater casualty on the sect. By the time the violence was contained, between 1,000 and 1,400 people had lost their lives with inestimable damages to properties. The sect was said to have used propelled grenades, locally produced bombs and AK 47 rifles in carrying out the attacks. Since then the



group has continually attacked and destroyed lives and properties, as shown in the table below.

**Table II: Chronicle of Boko Haram Attacks**

s/no	Date	Place	Device	Infrastructure Damaged
1	Jan, 2010	Maiduguri	Explosives	4 People Killed
2	Sept. 8, 2010	Bauchi Jail Break	Explosives	Set ablaze Bauchi Central Prison, 721 inmates freed
3	Dec,2010	Maiduguri	Explosives	Market Bombing (leading the arrest of 92 members of the sect)
4	Jan, 1,2011	Abuja	Explosives	Mammy Market bombed, scores of people killed.
5	Jan, 28, 2011	Maiduguri	Assassination	Killed a gubernatorial candidate, his brother and four police officers
6	March, 29, 2011	Maiduguri	Explosives	Police thwarted a plot to bomb ANPP Rally Aborted
7	April, 1, 2011	Bauchi	Explosives	Attacked a Police Station, carted away arms and ammunition
8	April, 9, 2011	Maiduguri	Explosives	Polling Center was bombed
9	April, 15, 2011	„	Explosives	INEC Office bombed, scores killed
10	April, 20, 2011	„	Guns and other related arms	Killed a Muslim cleric and ambushed several police officers
11	April, 22, 2011	Yola	Explosives	Jail break, freed 14 inmates
12	May, 29, 2011	Serial bombing in northern Nigeria; Army Barracks in Bauchi	Explosives	Over 15 people killed and military properties destroyed
13	June, 13, 2011	NNPC Staff Quarters, Narayi, Kaduna	Explosives Planted	Aborted
14	June, 15,2011	Kaduna ( rail track and bridge behind Dambo School)	Explosives Planted	Aborted after four hours of search by Policemen
15	June, 20, 2011	Katsina State – Kankara town	Explosives	Killed five Policemen, attacked Bank PHB
16	July, 2, 2011	Bulabulin– Ngaranaram and Galadima Wards in Maiduguri	Guns and related arms	Killed a retired soldier and five civilians
17	July, 3, 2011	Wulari ward near Mini Market, Maiduguri	Guns and related arms	Killed a Local government Chairman and other people
18	July, 5, 2011	Gwange, Maiduguri	Guns and related arms	Killed a policeman (CID) with the Gwange Divisional Police Station
19	„	„	Guns and related arms	Police officer killed
20	„	Bulunkutu R/ about	Unknown	Three people Killed
21	June, 6, 2011	Divisional Police H/Q, Toro, L.G, Bauchi	Arms and related ammunition	Raided and made away with arms
22	„	Maiduguri	Arms and related ammunition	Attacked JTF Patrol Team, Killed Seven soldiers, five civilians
23	June, 17, 2011	Abuja	Explosives	Attacked Police Headquarters, over 22 people killed and 36 cars destroyed
24	June 26, 2011	Dala Kabompi neighbourhood Maiduguri	„	25 people killed, about 30 injured. Property worth thousands of naira destroyed
25	June, 27, 2011	Maiduguri	„	2 Child vendors and others killed, while 3 Custom Officers were injured

26	July 8, 2011	Alkaleri Police Station Bauchi State	Explosives	Killed a policeman and injured 2 others
27	July 8, 2011	Unity Bank branch Bauchi.	Explosives	killed security guard, carted away money
28	July 10, 2011	Maiduguri road, Kaduna	Explosives	Properties worth millions of naira
29	Aug. 15, 2011	Police H/Q Maiduguri	Suicide Bomber	Failed attempt
30	Aug. 16, 2011	Police Station and Two Banks at Gamawa Bauchi State	Explosives	Made away with sacks of money
31	Aug. 26, 2011	UN H/Q, Abuja	Suicide Bomber	Scores killed and UN building destroyed
32	Sept,22, 2011	Mandala, Niger State	Unknown	Five Igbo traders killed for inability to recite Quran
33	Nov, 4, 2011	Maiduguri, Potiskum and Kaduna	Explosives, Guns and Suicide Bomber	Over 160 lives lost and properties destroyed.
34	Dec, 2011	Oriapkata, Kaduna	Explosives	Scores injured and killed
35	12 Dec, 2011	Mando, Kaduna	Explosives	Scores injured, building destroyed
36	Dec, 2011	Yobe and Maiduguri	Explosives and Raids	Policemen and others injured and killed
37	25 Dec, 2011	St Theresa Catholic Church, Mandalla, Niger State	Explosives	Worshippers and residents injured and killed
38	25 Dec, 2011	Yobe	Explosives	People killed
39	1 Jan, 2012	Winners Chapel, Sapele Road Benin	Planted Explosives	Foiled, suspects arrested
40	25 Dec, 2011	Jos, Plateau State	Explosives around church	Worshippers Killed
41	5 Jan, 2012	Deeper Life Church, Gombe	Guns (attack during worship inside church)	6 killed, 10 injured
42	„	Adamawa State	Gunmen	4 Christian/Igbo traders Killed
43	6 Jan, 2012	Christ Apostolic Church, Jimeta.Yola	Boko Haram Gunmen	8 Killed
44	„	Mubi, Adamawa State	„	About 20 Igbo /Christian Killed during a town hall meeting
45	6 Jan, 2012	Adamawa State	„	Killed Kinsmen of murdered Christians planning burial rites
46	7 Jan, 2012	University of Maiduguri	„	2 Christian Students Killed
47	„	Larmurde, Adamawa	„	7 Christians killed on their way out of Adamawa
48	22 Jan, 2012	St Theresa Ctholic Church and Evangelical Church Tafawa Balewa	Explosive s	No life lost
49	2013	Borno	Explosives	Over 800 blocks of Classrooms destroyed
50	2014	Federal Government College, Yobe	Gun and other explosive	Over 43 students killed
51	2014	Christian theological college and a section of a secondary school, Adamawa	Guns and Explosives	Over 37 students killed
51	2014	Military Base, Maiduguri	Explosives	Freed dozens of inmates and killed residents

Within the first quarter of 2014 alone, the group have carried out more than 40 attacked in which it is estimated that over 700 persons have lost their lives. Apart from targeting government institutions and installations, the group has publicly owned up to the attack of places of worship using explosives. In doing so,

they forcefully want to arm twist people and government to adopt and live according to their belief system. It is in line with this that scholars have described this group as Fundamentalist, because (according to them) the group's diverse political and social movements have as its goal the creation of more Islamically oriented Nigerian states and societies based on the principles and values of Islam. Violence is their chosen instrument for the achievement of their lofty objective. Of recent, the group gave Christians and Nigerian southerners living in the northern part of the country to leave the North or face massacre. In fact it was at the end of the ultimatum, that the church in Gombe was attacked.

The above situation of killing in the name of propagating a religion is presently threatening the unity and continuous existence of the Nigerian nation. This is because the different ethnic group are of the view that they have been selected for extermination and are thus calling for the breakup of the nation. As a way of achieving this and protecting their people, socio-cultural and religious groups are springing up in every part of the country either to defend the course of the religion or to defend their people. An example is the Akhwat Akwop group, which claims to represent the Christian version of the Jama'atu Ahliss-Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad (Boko Haram) (Adeseri, et al, 2011). The Akhwat Akwop group threatened retaliation if the activities of Boko Haram is not checked. (see Appendix A). In the eastern part of the country, the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign States of Biafra are threatening to retaliate the death of any Igbo man on Hausa in Igbo Land. This threat have been replicated by the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (a group in south south Nigeria) and Odu'a Peoples Congress, a Yoruba social organization.

### Conclusion

Although there is no clear cut conflict between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, but religion, its ideas and thinking, is providing a simple instrument for stereotyping and demonizing opponents. This is understood more when seen in the context of the fact that violence acquire greater potency once framed in religious terms. Religion in Nigeria has continually provided a legitimizing framework for violence that would otherwise be considered unacceptable. The love your neighbour angle of religion has been jettisoned.

It is however surprising that while Nigerians continue to kill themselves in the name of God and in defense of religion, other countries of the world especially in Africa are relatively stable. For instance in Niger, 99 percent of the population is Muslim, yet never has it been heard that non-Muslims there have attacked the minority and killed them. Some 94 percent of Egyptians are Muslims, only 6 percent are Coptic Christians, yet they all came together to overthrow a government headed by a Muslim early 2011. It has also never been heard that the Egyptian Christian minority is systematically subjected to periodic pogroms. Tunisia is 98 percent Muslim, with 1 percent Jews and 1 percent Christians. Tunisian Jews and Christians are not subjected to massacres by the Muslim majority. Libya has a 97 percent Muslim majority. No one religious faithful kills the other in that country. Morocco is nearly 99 percent Islamic. Christians and Muslims live in that country unmolested for their faith. Algeria is 99 percent Islamic. Christians and Jews who make up the remaining 1 percent are not always victims of massacres (Osita E, 2011) like it is in Nigeria.

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