

# Mitigating Official Boko Haram: A Biblical Approach

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## Abstract

It is no longer news that the violent Islamic sect popularly called “Boko Haram” is the current threat to Nigeria and her economy. Their activities are so devastating that, a quite number of lives and properties have been destroyed and annihilated by them. Several schools and students have gone on unexpected indefinite holidays not because of students’ riotous act but because of the Boko Haram’s presence and manifestations. Governments have declared curfews at several times and at several cities with plethora of people dejectedly leaving their cradle and economical habitation just because of this said sect. There cannot be end to the exposition of the activities of the sect if we should continue. However, solution is more germane now than exposing their activities and that is one of the intentions of this paper. The paper equally intended to expose another economy destroying agents herein tagged Official Boko Haram with the view of applying religious measures in curbing their activities so as to have a more stable, viable, formidable, and dependable economic nation.

**Keywords:** Jihad, Boko Haram, Corruptions, violence

## 1. Introduction

The unprecedented insurgence of terrorism in the globe with special bias to Nigeria seems to be a fulfillment of the prophetic utterance of Paul in the book of Timothy that, in the end time perilous time shall come (2 Tim 3v1ff).<sup>1</sup> This Pauline prophecy is in line with the word of Jesus in St. Matthew Chapter twenty four that, there shall be chaotic, turbulent, troublous events in the end time. Hence, the emergence of Boko Haram in the country, even though it is disgusting and devastating, is not unexpected. However, the thrust of this work is not about this insurgent group *per se* but the Boko Haram whose weapons of destruction are pens being used in offices unlawfully and unfaithfully. In like manner, plausible and possible solution(s) will be recommended to mitigate them. Besides, this work shall trace the origin of Boko Haram cum their activities and make suggestion(s) that will bring a lasting solution.

### 1.1 Etymology of Boko Haram

Boko Haram group are people who are committed to the propagation of the Prophet’s teaching and jihad. They were originally known as jihadist terrorists or orthodox Muslims based in the northeast of Nigeria.<sup>2</sup> The group strongly opposed man-made laws and to abolish the secular system of government and establish sharia law in the country.

A source, however, claimed the group adopted its name official name to be people who are committed to the propagation of the Prophet’s teachings and *Jihad*, which is the English translation of *Juma’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati wal*. The term *Boko Haram* etymologically comes from the Hausa language. While *Boko* means book, *Haram* means sin or forbidden. Hence, the term means western education is forbidden. The group earned this name due to its strong opposition to anything western because to them, it is corrupting muslims.<sup>3</sup>

#### 1.1.1 Ideology of Boko Haram

Boko Haram is an indigenous Salafist group which only turned itself into a Salafist Jihadist group in 2009. The group does not only state that the interaction with the Western World is forbidden, but that, it also contaminates Muslims’ faith as if the said faith is not an imported one from the western world. The group publicly extols its ideology despite the fact that its founder and former leader Muhammad Yusuf was himself a highly educated man who lived an affluent life.

In an interview with the leader in 2009 at BBC,<sup>4</sup> it was gathered that the leader rejected scientific explanation for natural phenomena such as evaporation of water being the cause of rain according to Darwinian theory and that the earth is spherical in shape. His rejection was based on the fact that, these scientific explanations run contrary to the teachings of Allah. Before his death, the man reiterated the sect’s objective of changing the current education system and rejecting democracy.

In the wake of the 2009, the crackdown on its members and its subsequent re-emergence, the growing frequency and geographical range of attacks attributed to Boko Haram have led some political and religious leaders in the north to the conclusion that the group has now expanded beyond its original religious composition to include not only Islamic militants but also criminal elements and disgruntled politicians as well. According to Governor Kashim Shettima of Borno state,<sup>4</sup> Boko Haram has become a franchise group that anyone can identify with or possibly join. It is like a Bermuda Triangle.

### 1.1.1.1 Origin of Boko Haram

The group was founded by Mohammad Yusuf in 2002 in the city of Maiduguri, Borno State of Nigeria with the aim of establishing a shari'a government in the state under the leadership of Governor Ali Modu Sheriff. He built a complex where there was a mosque and a school to enroll and train all interested people in his vision; and information had it that, many people especially the poor across the nation with special bias to the north enrolled.<sup>5</sup> Before long, there was a strange development as the group seemed to derail from their set goal(s) in that, the center became the arena of recruitment of future jihadists to fight the state. The membership of the group, as later found out, included citizens from neighbouring countries namely Chad and some Arabic speaking nations. In 2004, their meeting arena was relocated to Yusuf's home state, Yobe in the village called Kanamma near Niger border.<sup>6</sup>

Human Right Watch Researcher, Eric Guttschuss<sup>7</sup> told IRIN News that Yusuf successfully got members or followers from the unemployed youth "by speaking out against police and political corruption". In like manner, Abdulkarim Mohammed, a researcher on this violent so-called Islamic sect opined that, violent uprisings in Nigeria are ultimately due to the fallout of frustration with corruption and the attendant social malaise of poverty cum unemployment.<sup>8</sup> This is a great challenge and food for thought for the governments at all levels in the country as well as rich Nigerians. One good turn, they say, deserves another. So, one bad turn must equally deserve another and for every action, there must necessarily be corresponding reaction. This suggests that, if unemployment continues to be on the increase in lieu of nipping it in the bud and corruptions keep escalating and spreading like harmattan fire in the country, then *haramic* activities in multiple forms are inevitable.

The underlisted are some of the sect's activities with special bias to the beginning of their violence cum the timeline of their incidents

7 September, 2010	Bauchi prison break
31 December, 2010	Abuja attack
22 April, 2011	The sect freed 14 prisoners during a jailbreak in Yola, Adamawa State
29 May, 2011	Northern Nigeria bombings
16 June, 2011	The group claimed responsibility for the 2011 Abuja Police Headquarters bombing
26 June, 2011	Bomb attack on a Restaurant in Maiduguri
10 July, 2011	Bomb attack on all Christians Fellowship Church in Suleja, Niger State
11 July, 2011	The University of Maiduguri's closure due to a Security Report about Boko Haram intending attack.
12 August, 2011	Prominent Muslim Cleric, Liman Bana was shot dead by the sect
26 August, 2011	Abuja bombing
4 November, 2011	Damaturu's attack
25 December, 2011	Bombing of a Catholic Church in Mandala, Borno State
20 January, 2012	Kano bombing
8 February, 2012	The group claimed responsibility for the bombing at the army headquarters in Kaduna. What a tragedy! When the camp of those to defend the country's territory against terror attack was bombed, what then is the fate of the bloody Civilians?
16 February, 2012	There was another jail break by the sect in Kogi state; 119 prisoners were released and 1 warder killed
8 March, 2012	This was the day an Italian Engineer, Franco Lamlinara and a Briton, Christopher McManus abducted in 2011 by the violent Islamic sect were killed an attempt to rescue them
29 April, 2012	Bayero University Bombing
30 April, 2012	Jalingo Bombing
1 May,	Sporadic shooting between Boko Haram and Joint Task Force. The incident claimed some lives also. <sup>9</sup>

If we are to continue the revelation of these systematic and consistent operations of this violent Islamic sect, it may pose much threat to us as one can guess that some people may be thinking that they can even blast right now since it seems their operation is on daily basis. It is noteworthy that the group conducted its operations more or less peacefully during the first seven years of its existence but this changed in 2009 when the Nigerian government launched an investigation into the group's activities following reports that its members were arming themselves. Prior to that, the government reportedly ignored warnings about the increasingly militant character of the organization, including that of a military officer.

When the government came into action, several members of the group were arrested in Bauchi, sparking deadly clashes with Nigerian security forces which led to the deaths of an estimated 700 people. During the fighting with the security forces, it was gathered that Boko Haram used fuel-laden motorcycles and bows with poison arrows to attack. In this attack, the group's founder and the then leader Mohammed Yusuf was killed by the police.<sup>10</sup> But the man had been rounded up and detained by the police before the attack which

means it was the group's members' attempt to rescue their leader that led to the war between them and the police. After the killing of M. Yusuf, the group carried out its first terrorist attack in Borno State in January 2010 and this resulted in the killing of four people. Since then, the violence has only been escalating in terms of both frequency and intensity. In January 2012, Abubakar Shekau, a former deputy to Yusuf, appeared in a video posted on YouTube where it was revealed that he, according to Reuters, took the leadership of the group. However, Shekau equally died during violence in 2009. By early 2012, the group was already responsible for over 900 deaths.<sup>11</sup>

As regards funding, a spokesman of Boko Haram claimed that former Kano state governor Ibrahim Shekerau and former Bauchi state governor Isa Yuguda paid them monthly. Besides, the Nigerian Central Bank governor, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, several big politicians, former heads of state and even the Federal Government of Nigeria under the leadership of Late President Ya'adua funded the group at one time or the other.

#### **1.1.1.1.1 Official Boko Haram**

Without mincing words, it is not only the activities of this violent Islamic sect using terrible explosive ammunition on the country that is inimical to the country's economy and peace as there are numerous official and unofficial, recognised and unrecognised groups whose activities are equally inimical to the national treasuries. Hence, the imperativeness of the revelation of and solution to the terrible and destructive activities of the official Boko Haram. By this term, the paper is referring to numerous Nigerians especially people at the helms of affairs, people in charge of the country's financial and material resources but using both their pens, positions, and every available illegitimate means to siphon the country's resources at the expense, detriment and impoverishment of the masses. For instance, the hot case of #32.8 billion pension fraud widely reported in The Nation Newspaper on April 2, 2012 is a testimony to this.<sup>12</sup> #24 billion carted away by the former staff of the office of the Head of Service of the Federation.<sup>13</sup> Unprecedented supposed public money being wasted on election manipulation mostly by incumbent political office holders such as president, governors, and chairman and so on apart from huge embezzlements and several atrocities they perpetrate in office is without any doubt, a great cause of set back and destruction to the country's economy. Besides, these heinous activities of these leaders have led to the death of many poor citizen; many have become destitute and depressed. Parts of the consequences of the activities of these official Boko Haram are evident in bad roads, epileptic power supply, unequipped or empty hospitals, falling standard of education, incessant industrial disharmony by the labour because of the failure of government to meet their necessary yearnings, unemployment, wide disparity between the rich and the poor just to mention a few.<sup>14</sup>

Of all the sectors in Nigeria, the political sector seems to be the worst and most corruptive as our political leaders, who are in charge of the national cake (national resources), have grossly failed the followers or the electorates. They have made embezzlements, personalizing governments' properties, squandering national resources on trivial things that add to the problems of the poor and pitiable masses, killings, manipulations, and all kinds of unrighteous acts their points of duties. Without doubt, the financial, material, political, economical, and all round fraudulences in different Nigerian offices are too alarming and highly "haramic".

#### **Biblical Boko Haram**

Though there is no particular reference in the Holy Bible where education is said to be unlawful and forbidden, there are a lot of instances where some wicked beings rose up to kill people. A few of them were Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and Herod and so on. Taking Herod as an instance, the book of Act 12 reveals how he was picking the apostles one after the other purposely to kill them and it is sad to recall that, killing people then pleased his heart. However, our concern here is the step taken by the church to halt this Herodic activity. Hence, the necessity of biblical approach towards the solution to national chaos.

#### **1.1.1.1.1.1 Towards a Solution**

The origin of both good and bad happenings can be traced to the Holy Books. Hence, killings, corruption, oppressive governments, pondering and looting just to mention a few are not alien to the people of Ancient Near East but the good news is that, when the people concerned take steps to revamp the situation they always apply ecclesiastical methods. These steps among others include genuine and not political propaganda prayers. Examples can be found in Exodus 12-14 (Israel exit from Egypt); Jonah 1-4 (The salvation of Nineveh from destruction); Act 12 (The stoppage of the killing activity of Herod); just to mention but a few. Hence, the imperativeness of the solemn biblical calls in 2 Chronicle 7v14:

If my people that are called by name can humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land (KJV)

<sup>14</sup>

It is interesting to note that Nigeria is a God's country because there is no Nigerian that does not practice one religion or the other (we suppose). Hence, Nigerians are God's people. Humility in the above verse can be rendered to mean "coming to the realization of oneself; admitting one's fault without unnecessary self defense; readiness to change if one is made to realize is on a wrong track" just to mention a few. If Nigerians can realize that we are on the wrong track in that, education, security, transportation, infrastructures, and the like are not

what they should be in the country as we cannot claim to be a model or standard in any of these sectors in the globe and equally be ready to genuinely pray to God and not political propaganda kind of prayer, then a positive change is inevitable.

Besides, the above passage which is the onus of the paper's recommended solution equally suggests "seeking God's face and turning from wicked way". Seeking God's face is hereby interpreted to mean banking on God for all things and this invariably means putting God first in all things. The latter suggestion that says turn from wicked ways means not playing prangs with God by not claiming to be serving, trusting God without his fear in hearts. Lack of God's fear manifests in killings, embezzlements, (etc) and these vicious activities are occupying place of pride in Nigeria as the perpetrators are not ashamed of the activities but still fling their dresses in their exotic cars and worse still go to churches or mosques for thanksgiving, donations and launchings. In fact, majority of these official boko haram are the patrons and matrons of so many churches and mosques. This is too unfortunate. Hence, the church and mosque need to turn to God and really maintain their sacred position of preaching and practicing righteousness. Secondly, they must be ready never to condole and harbor unrighteousness and unrighteous people or give them any recognition because of their "dirty" wealth but rather rebuke them sharply.

In like manner, the electorates must stop the habit of praising, celebrating, and extolling these official Boko Haram who use their pens and offices to perpetrate corruptions and thereby crawling and destroying our national economy. Rather, they should cultivate the nature of calling a spade a spade in that; they should always ignore these kinds of people most especially with their votes during elections because that is their power. This, we hope, will be sending signals of cautions, disciplines, and corrections to these corrupt people and thereby resulting in them turning a new leave.

As part of the measure to mitigate official Boko Haram in the country, it will be plausible to state that arrest and prosecution of these people should no longer be to fulfill all righteousness. Rather, it should be henceforth be thorough and result oriented. Hence, the need for this suggestion. Anyone caught and rounded up on the ground of corruption or *haramic* behaviour especially in government should henceforth be drained to impoverishment by confiscating all their official and unofficial financial cum material belongings from when they were age 18 years to date. This excess confiscation is to serve as interest on the corruption. Later, the culprits should crudely be imprisoned for a reasonable period of time and their confiscated belongings should be judiciously expended on the community, state or country they exploited. For instance, if a governor is found guilty of corruption in Ekiti State and these proposed steps are taken against him, his both official and unofficial belongings already collected should be expended on the state such that, the people of the state will be in the know of the projects prosecuted by such resources. His houses abroad should be disposed for the consumption of the state. His certificates or anything he can use to rise again should be taken and government should restrict his movement to his hometown. Without mincing words, these perpetrators of evil will drastically be cautioned if this measure is considered appropriate for use.

Concerning the so-called violent Islamic sect known as Boko Haram, it suffice to say that arresting and prosecuting their suspected sponsors using the above measure of prosecution is the probable solution. This is because; the sect is like a tree flourishing on the bill of both the fibrous and tap roots that supply nutrients. If the roots are therefore disengaged from the tree, its death is inevitable.

However, it is paramount to state that the desired change we expect in the country at large must commence from individuals and families because charity, they say, begins at home. Hence, turning to God in prayer with utmost readiness to forsake wicked ways and imbibe God's fear in all endeavours must start with every individual, family, organization, etc as this will later metamorphose to all tiers of government in the country.

## Conclusion

The work has examined the activities of the Islamic violent sect which is giving the entire nation a serious concern. In fact, it seems to us that the Federal Government of Nigeria with her head being called the president and commander in chief of armed forces is in a state of confusion, helplessness, and disarray over the incessant operations of the sect that claim irreparable lives and properties. Also, the people whose activities are inimical, dangerous, and topsy-turvy have been x-rayed in this work. The latter group whom we really not pay attention unto has been nomenclatured official Boko Haram and the solution to nip their activities in the bud or possibly to put a final halt have been suggested. On the final note, the paper has recommended that every Nigerian should be humble enough to turn to God in prayer and repent from their wicked ways and henceforth cultivate the habit of praying for the country on daily basis.

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