



BISHOPS EXPRESS CONCERN OVER GOVERNMENT'S LUKEWARNESS TOWARDS PROTECTION OF LIFE AND PROPERTY

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IBADAN, NIGERIA -

Catholic Bishops of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ibadan have called on the Federal Government to be more responsive to the Constitutional duty of protecting the lives of innocent Nigerians. According to them: "Time has come to firmly and sincerely protect religious freedom as the fundamental right of every citizen in Nigeria and make it impossible for anyone to take away from another by acts of violence and destruction."

The Bishops made the call in a Communiqué issued at the end of their first Provincial Plenary Meeting held recently at the Jubilee Centre, in Ibadan, Oyo State; and signed by Archbishop Gabriel 'Leke Abegunrin of Ibadan Archdiocese and Bishop John Oyejola of Osogbo Diocese, President and Secretary of the Provincial CBCN Conference, respectively. The communiqué was titled: Whither Nigeria.

In the communiqué, the Bishops condemned in strong terms the recent spineless killing of about 70 innocent Nigerian farmers by rampaging Fulani herdsmen, in Benue State and the mindless attacks on homebound Christian worshippers and vanderlization of their churches by armed youths chanting anti-Christian slogans, in Ilorin, capital of Kwara State. The also identified other atrocities in different parts of the country that infringe on the fundamental rights of the citizens and their rights of freedom of worship.

Re-acting to the crisis in Benue State, the Bishops declared: “The continuous conflicts provoked by so-called Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria attained a tragic climax with the brutal slaughter of over 70 people recently buried in Benue State, with little effort from the Federal government to prevent or assuage the tragedy.”

The Bishops continued: “The unfortunate by-now-familiar ‘siddon-look’ attitude of the Federal Government to such tragedies involving cow-herders in parts of the country has made many Nigerians to question whether animal rights could indeed be placed above human lives. Most people wonder who owns these “sacred cows” anyway, because of which farmlands and human life could be so wantonly destroyed.”

While commiserating with all the families affected by the latest tragedy and prayed for the repose of the souls of the deceased and speedy recovery of the injured; the Bishops call for an all stakeholders efforts to put an end to the dastardly act. Their words: “All hands must be on deck to put a stop to the bloody charade witnessed so frequently from encounters with Fulani herdsmen”.

They called on the government and security agencies in the country to ameliorate the situation and ensure the protection of the lives of innocent citizens, noting that lack of official preemptive action and delay in reacting to crises has been responsible for the carnage. The Bishops declared: “We also call on the government at all levels to support the legitimate yearnings of peoples all over Nigeria to live and thrive in peace within their rights as citizens of Nigeria.”

Pointing out that cattle-rearing is practiced in other countries in Africa and the world; the bishops added: “We therefore urge that our governments consider improved ways of catering for cattle with minimum stress to other legitimate professions, as is done elsewhere in the world and apprehend and prosecute all those who have brought so much pain upon so many people in Nigeria.”

The Bishops recalling some of the challenges facing the country which include: unemployment, human trafficking, terrorism, kidnapping, nepotism, religious bigotry and corruption, warned that Nigeria might face a most uncertain future; if these challenges are not properly addressed by government and all stakeholders in the nation.”

Noting that the nation’s woes today outweigh the improvement made in the areas of power supply, agriculture and other identified areas; the Bishops called on Nigerians “to continue to work and pray to bring about God’s kingdom of justice peace and love.” They concluded: “God’s plans for our country like for all his children are good and enduring. Ours is the duty to take advantage of his promise and steadfastness.”

Other members of the Provincial Ecclesiastical Conference present at the meeting are: Bishops AyoMaria Atoyebi of Ilorin; Emmanuel Badejo of Oyo; Felix Ajakaiye of Ekiti and Jude Arogundade of Ondo.