



EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY RECOMMENDED FOR COUNTERING ISLAMIC RELIGION FUNDAMENTALISM

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Education and economic emancipation of the masses through sustainable empowerment programmes have been identified as effective factors to effectively counter the nefarious activities of Islamic fundamentalists and the activities of the murderous Fulani herdsmen in the country.

This recommendation was advocated in the communiqué issued at the end of the 2018 National Seminaries Committee Workshop, held recently at the Spiritan School of Philosophy, Isieniu, Nsukka, Enugu State. The programme was attended by Rectors of Seminaries in the country. The theme of the workshop was: Christian Witness in the Face of Islamic Militancy. The communiqué was signed by Most Rev. Valerian Okeke, Archbishop of Onitsha Archdiocese, Chairman, Seminaries Committee and Rev. Fr. Mark Nzukwein, Secretary of the body.

According to the document: "The Church in Nigeria is passing through a very trying time more than ever before. The recent massacre of two Catholic priests and some parishioners during Holy Mass in Benue State and similar killings in other parts of the country strike deep note on the ears of the populace." The participants at the workshop regretted that all the human efforts put in place to promote dialogue seem not to be bearing the desired fruit.

The communiqué traced the genesis of Islamic fundamentalism in the country to the time 19th Century Jihad of

Uthman Dan Fodio adding that for better understanding of the scenario, “it is very important to see Islamic violence within the context of the historical evolution of the Nigerian State. It also dwelt on the genesis of recent of religion violence in the country from the time Gardawa to Maitatsine Riot, the Boko Haram insurgency and the nefarious activities of the Fulani Cattle herdsman.

In their nine-point solution recommendation, the delegates at the workshop also identified ignorance, poverty and unemployment as other factors that feathered the impunity of Islamic religion fundamentalism. They declared: “The Church and other noble agencies should continue to correct the distorted historical narrative of fundamentalist’s ideology which identifies colonialism and western civilization with Christianity”.

They called on the Church and government to continue to foster education at the grassroots and establish schools where they are not found, to counter the factor of ignorance; while government, Church and non-Governmental Organizations (NGO’s) should honestly strive for the economic emancipation of the masses through sustainable empowerment programmes to counter the factor of unemployment; since mostly recruited fanatics are from poverty stricken and unemployed masses.

Christians were also urged to play active role in the democratic process in policy formulation in the country as well as use the power of unity to counter Islamic extremism. Church leaders were also admonished “to work closely with peace-loving Muslims to tackle the problem of injustice that fuels fundamentalism”.

Noting that the “defense of life is a legitimate right and duty which every Christian should foster”; the communiqué concluded: “understanding fundamentalists groups, their ideologies and how to counter these ideologies should be an integral part of seminary formation and general Christian formation; and Government should be held accountable for the life of every citizen irrespective of religion or ethnic group.” It concluded by calling on Christians to remain resolute in professing their faith and witnessing to Christ.

