



Features: EXECUTIVE NARRATIVE OF TERRORISM IN NIGERIA

Oct 22, 2018

ABUJA, NIGERIA -

On September 26, 2018, Guardian online reported that President Buhari, in a statement signed by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Femi Adesina, said: “The terrorist insurgencies we face, particularly in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, are partly fueled by local factors and dynamics, but now increasingly by the international Jihadi Movement, runaway fighters from Iraq and Syria and arms from the disintegration of Libya.” This was in New York at the global audience during the opening of the General Debate of the 73rd Session of the United Nation’s General Assembly (<https://guardian.ng/news/buhari-blames-terrorism-on-iraqi-syrian>

[fighters/](#)). The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria called on the international community to strengthen its resolve to combat ethnic and religious cleansing everywhere. This executive narrative is very worrisome as it puts fear and panic in the citizens of Nigeria. Many people would love to know how these runaway fighters from

Iraq, Syria and Libya entered Nigeria with heavy weapons.

This narrative could raise more questions on the porous nature of the borders in Nigeria. The narrative could also assist partners of inter-religious dialogue to explore how political violence has taken the form of ethnic and religious cleansing in Nigeria. If the staff of the Nigerian Custom Service (NCS) are either Christians, Muslims or adherents of the Traditional Religions, could they not be guided by the ethics of their religion to take their work as a divine call to serve the nation and save Nigerians. Could the common good not take priority over their selfish interest in carrying out their legitimate duties. What can we take away from the explanation of the Comptroller General of Nigerian Custom Service? On November 29, 2016, the Nations Newspaper online reported that

Comptroller General of the Nigerian Customs Service, Col Hameed Ali (Retired) explained that the nation's borders are porous because of their interconnectivity with the adjoining nations. He added that there is no line demarcating Nigeria from its neighboring countries to specifically show the end of the country. According to him, besides, Nigerians' kinsmen living across the borders, in neighboring countries speak the same language with the nation. This situation, said the Customs boss, makes it difficult to claim that a particular boarder is well secured in Nigeria. These were statements made at the opening

ceremony of the first meeting of the technical committee on the security project(<http://thenationonlineng.net/nigerias-borders-porous-customs-boss/>).

If the narrative of the Comptroller General affirms that of the President, then the narrative of the ethno-religious accusations whenever there is an attack would need further investigation to fish out the real criminals who are enemies of Nigeria. It is however sad that most killings in Nigeria often end up unresolved and this has affected almost every part of the ethnic groups in Nigeria. We could expatiate this with some examples of the political killings that still cry out for investigation. When Dele Giwa, the founding editor of the Newswatch magazine was killed with a letter bomb on October 19, 1986, we never imagined that a time would come when Nigeria would experience suicide bombing. So many people thought that the killings would stop when power shifted from the military dictatorship to civilian democracy. There was no terrorism during the military regime. In the various civilian government, some people have opined that the various genocides in the various parts of Nigeria have destroyed more lives and property than the Nigeria Civil War. Many have argued that even Boko Haram was politically initiated in Borno State. Could it not be true that the first Boko Haram “soldiers” were political thugs and not religious jihadists?

There is a saying that it is the rat in the house that invites the rats from outside to feast

on the food in the house. If it is true that the terrorists in Nigeria are “runaway fighters from Iraq and Syria and arms from the disintegration of Libya”, then we can also say that the political thugs who metamorphosed into international terrorists prepared a home for them. I have said many times that one of the strategies of the terrorists is to inflame a religious war. What does it take to make every Nigerian a Muslim? What does it take to make every Nigerian a Christian? Is that project realistic in Nigeria even with the mandate to go into the whole world to proclaim the Good News and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19)? Such missionary zeal would make Christianity and Islam compete in converting every Nigerian to God. Then every Nigeria will fear God and would be zealous in doing the right thing. Then for love of God, every Nigerian would be a religious person with good moral disposition that would hate violence. Then every Nigerian would be a better human being. Then religious fanaticism would lead to respect for the sacredness of life and the dignity of the human person. Then nobody would have the courage to be a terrorist and kill in the name of the most loving, beneficent, merciful and compassionate God(Surah Al-Fatihah). God is good to all; his compassion rests on all he has made (Psalm 145: 8-9).

This executive narrative should motivate us to examine the psychological and anthropological orientation of Nigerians in this dispensation. What is the attitude of an average Nigerian who is struggling to have ordinary food on the table? Why is it so easy

for the external invaders to recruit some youths into their terrorist organizations? What is the role of hunger in this whole narrative? Does hunger have a religion or tribe? Some no longer care where food comes from. All they want is to eat even if the food come from devil since the government cannot provide the basic needs for the citizens. It appears that the nation has killed the dream and ambition of the youths. While some girls use their bodies to earn a living, the boys use their muscles in the form of crime. Among the beneficiaries of these evils are the rich who are only concerned about themselves and their families. Once in a while some of these rich people are kidnapped by the angry youths. Simple security has become a mirage for the common person in Nigeria. Many cannot sleep with two eyes closed in some areas. The poor are killed, raped and displaced from their homes. To keep body and soul, the poor sell their votes to keep the greedy politicians in power. Yet Nigerians are distracted and misled with ethno-religious narratives.

According to the National Baseline Youth Survey (2012), the population of youths between the ages of 15 and 35 in Nigeria was estimated to be 64 million where female were 51.6 percent and male were 48.4 percent (<http://afriheritage.org/blog/nigerian-youths-which-way-to-go/>). China that has a higher number of youths was able to harness and positively engage their youths by creating labour and employment for them. This led to their economic boom and today, Nigeria is

borrowing money from China, a once poorer nation. In Nigeria, the human resources of the youths are not seen as an advantage hence employment is not based on merit and professionalism. To get a job, even a first class graduate would need a letter or note from a big political leader as if the job is for sale. This has led the average boy or girl in Nigeria to engage in one or two of the following: cultism, immorality, obsession for material things, unhealthy comparison, bad friends, drug addiction and terrorist activities. Nigeria must arise and provide quality education for the youths, provide employment for them and give adequate incentives to the security agents to change this executive narrative. May God save Nigeria from this distress.

By Rev. Fr. Cornelius Afebu Omonokhua

(Fr. Cornelius Afebu Omonokhua is the Director of Mission and Dialogue of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (omonokhuac@gmail.com)