



LUKEWARM ATTITUDE OF GOVERNMENT TO NATIONWIDE INSECURITY WORRIES BISHOPS

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OWERRI, NIGERIA -

The Catholic Bishops of Owerri Ecclesiastical Province have condemned in strong terms the present state of insecurity in the country and the lukewarm attitude of the Federal Government and the country's security agencies at addressing the worrisome situation holistically and in a pragmatic manner that could guarantee safety of life and property of all Nigerians irrespective of their differences.

The concern of the Bishops was expressed in the communiqué issued by the Owerri Ecclesiastical Bishops' Conference at the end of their second plenary meeting for the year 2019. The communiqué titled ***Be Strong! Fear Not!*** and signed by Archbishop Anthony J.V Obinna of Owerri and Bishop Augustine Ukwuoma, President and Secretary of the Conference respectively; deliberated on a number of pastoral issues affecting the Ecclesiastical region and the fears, harrowing experiences and general insecurity of life in the country.

According to the Bishops: "Our people are currently undergoing unbearable threats from some of our political

leaders and even from our security agents. The situation has been compounded by the marauding, so-called Fulani herdsmen and other bandits. The situation is equally compounded by government's apparent silence over infringements at various levels and by shady land deals by certain community leaders."

They continued: "Every day, and across our States, we hear heartbreaking tales of kidnapping, raping, maiming, extorting, land-grabbing, killing and destroying of people's sources of livelihood. We continue often to hope in vain for our elected public officers and security agents to protect our citizens as expected and as enshrined in our Constitution."

The Bishops also expressed disdain at the unemployment situation in the country which according to them "is causing grave concern to the society as governments fail to provide jobs and factories they promise, and as so many youths look more for quick money-making ventures even at the cost of their lives and other lives rather than pursue creative, innovative and gainful jobs."

Other worrisome areas articulated by the Bishops include: Unpaid pensions and gratuities of retired people; building of substandard roads that cause Nigerians untold hardship and trauma; nonchalant attitude of public officers in charge of public utilities facilities, including hospitals, schools and electricity; resulting in the decay and malfunction of these facilities; failure of teachers to impart right quality knowledge in schools and spiritual leaders abandoning their flock to wolves and marauders.

Offering possible solutions to the identified challenges facing the country, the Bishops called on Nigerians not to lose hope and be rest assured in God. Their words: "Our strong faith in God and our reliance upon Him constitute our foremost source of strength as we chart our way forward in the midst of difficulties, possible despondency and resignation. That is why *"Even if we are troubled or worried, or being persecuted, or lacking food or clothes, or being*

threatened, or even attacked these are the trials through which we triumph by the power of him who loved us” (Romans 8:35 - 37).

The Catholic Ecclesiastical Province of Owerri is made up of the Archdiocese of Owerri and the Dioceses of Umuahia, Orlu, Okigwe, Ahiara and Aba.