



NEW CAMA LAW, AN ILLWIND THAT COULD DISRUPT THE COUNTRY'S FRAGILE PEACE

Sep 18, 2020

OSHOGBO -

The passage of the Corporate Affairs Commission, 2020 Companies and Allied Matters Bill, CAMA, recently assented into law by President Muhammadu Buhari, has been described as an ill-wind that will blow no good to the country; and the Federal Government has been urged to revert the law to avert religious crisis. This assertion was the consensus of some Catholic Bishops who commented on the amended law which classified Churches under the supervision of the Corporate Affairs commission.

Speaking in Osogbo, Osun State; during a press conference on the Silver Jubilee celebration of the erection of Osogbo Diocese, the Apostolic Nuncio to Nigeria, Archbishop Antonio Guido Filipazzi, expressed deep concern on the decision of government to control the church with the amended CAMA 2020 Law.

Responding to questions from reporters at the press conference, held at the St Kizito Pastoral Centre, Ede; the Apostolic Nuncio questioned the rationale behind Companies and Allied Matters Act, CAMA 2020; which replaces that of 1990; noting that: “Nobody can impose any law on the church”. With the new development, Section 839 (1) and (2) places the church under the supervision of the CAC.

In his own remarks, the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, Most Rev. Ignatius Ayau Kaigama stated that the Federal Government’s motive behind the amended CAMA law is bad. He added: “Kaigama said: “Our experts are dealing with the issue of CAMA. It is not something we can just talk about anyhow. This needs careful analysis and we are doing that. “On the surface, it doesn’t look as if there is a good intension to it. It doesn’t look that the motive is right. It doesn’t look like enough study was done about the implications of how this law is going to be.” The Archbishop added: “And now that they know, I hope prudence and wise judgment will lead our authorities to humbly start all over and see how these law does no generate unprecedented problems for our country and destroy the little peace we have.”

Archbishop Kaigama made the remarks in Abuja, After his investiture of the Pallium by the Apostolic Nuncio to Nigeria, Most Rev. Antonio Guido Filipazzi, at the Our Lady Queen of Nigeria Pro-Cathedral, Garki, Area 3, Abuja.

In a statement issued on the controversial law, the Catholic Bishop of Oyo Diocese, Most Rev. Emmanuel Adetoyese Badejo, condemning the new law noting that the law treats Churches unfairly. The bishop further stated: “Obviously, there is so much opacity and lack of precision in these powers granted to the CAC and no reasonable non-governmental organization would agree to be governed by such a law. It might infringe on the constitutional rights of citizens to freely associate and freely govern their associations. Many legal luminaries have described this opacity as a poisoned chalice that can be subjectively interpreted and applied and the Churches should simply not drink it.”

He further stated: “Many Nigerians are sometimes at pains to fully trust even the courts

when laws are not precisely formulated and clear to all. If churches do not enjoy grants-in-aid from government, they cannot justifiably be subjected to such overbearing powers as have been granted the CAC. Whatever merits CAMA may have, one is inclined to see it as an ambush provision.

Noting that there was insufficient consultation with stakeholders or the public before the amended law was enacted, Bishop Badejo stated that: “If implemented, in its current form, the CAMA law could be seen as an unjust provision”. He therefore urged the Federal Government to “demonstrate its democratic character by ordering the review of the law taking into consideration the public outcry about those sections that cause so much concern.”

In his homily at the celebration of the Mass for the 21st Sunday of the year 2020, at St. Theresa’s Nsukka, the Bishop of Nsukka Diocese, Most Rev. Godfrey Onah regretted that instead of addressing serious issues like insecurity and other challenges bedeviling the country, the government is frivolously addressing a trivial matter like controlling Churches through the new CAMA law.

Why querying the rationale behind the decision of the Federal Government to put Churches in the country under the supervision of the Corporate Affairs Commission, for monitoring and supervision; Bishop Onah condemned in strong terms, the lackadaisical attitude of Christian legislators in the National Assembly for allowing the bill to scale through.

He remarked: "It is unfair that the church is grouped among Non-Governmental Organizations, NGOs, in the country that should be monitored and controlled by the Corporate Affairs Commission, CAC. According to him, if the legislators had done the right thing and prevented the bill from scaling through, the church will not be in the present situation. His words: "If they had opposed this bill on the floor of the house it would not have been passed and sent to the President for assent. "I blame Christian legislators for doing nothing and allowing the passage of the 2020 CAMA Act.

The bishop continued: "The most annoying part of it is that the Law empowers the CAC to suspend board of trustees including those of churches suspected to have mismanaged its finance and appoint interim managers to manage their affairs. "If this

law is implemented, what it means is that churches in the country have been reduced to ordinary secular organizations,”

Bishop Onah stated that the “Government should focus and monitor its ministries, agencies and other government institutions where it budgets billions of Naira annually and not church offerings. “Had it been that government gave allocations to churches and decided to monitor its usage, nobody will question government.”

Pointing out that the 2020 CAMA Act is an ill-wind that will blow the no good to the country, Bishop Onah wondered what the Government wants to gain from the passage of the Act and monitoring of Churches finances as it is not providing any subvention for them.

He therefore called on the Government to rescind the order, without further delay, as the new edict constitute a threat to churches in the country. The bishop, wondered what the

Federal Government wanted to achieve in monitoring how the finances of churches in the country are managed when it contributes no dime to the church.

It will be recalled that President Muhammadu Buhari on August 7, 2020, signed into law the Company and Allied Matters Bill; CAMA, 2020. The bill which was passed by the National Assembly replaces the 1990 CAMA. With this development, the church is now considered a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), which can be controlled and supervised by the government. In the new law, section 839 (1) and (2) empowers the supervising minister to suspend trustees of any association (in the case of the church) and appoint interim officials of the association for some given reasons.