

**Nigeria: Too Rich for Dignity and the Law?
Perspectives after the 2007 elections**

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**Civil Society, Political Consolidation and the Challenges
of ethno-religious Conflicts
Proposals for a Contextual Conflict Resolution in Nigeria**

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[As a matter of concern I would like to dedicate this presentation to two people (Mrs. Christiana Oluwatoyin Oluwasesin and Rev. Ibrahim Yusuf Balami): Mrs. Christiana is a schoolteacher who was killed by Islamic Militants few weeks ago in Gombe while invigilating an examination¹ Balanni's house and Church building were destroyed during a violent demonstration by Islamic militants during a destructive demonstration as a reaction to the cartoon of Prophet Mohammad published in a Danish Newspaper].²

Nigeria a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religions country has experienced several civil unrest and the most deadly, complicated multi-ethnic and multi-religious violence more than most countries in Africa. Nigeria, the 6th largest world producer of crude oil is also one of the most populous African countries; expected by the world to be extremely rich, Nigeria has become one of the poorest countries of the world because several reasons including corruption and destructions as a result of several devastating conflicts year-in year-out.

The country's population is still largely unhealthy and uneducated. It is no exaggeration that more than 70% of the population has not been able to attend formal Educational Institution. Just recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) has given a shocking revelation that a recent result of a research has shown that an average Nigerian might not live longer than 45 years as a result of inadequate health care in the Country.³ Nduka has observed that the incidence of poverty in Nigeria has not improved, instead it has increased, from 28.1% in 1980 – 20% in 1997 according to Otonti Nduka".⁴

The Context of Nigeria and the Participation of Civil Society in Nation Building

Civil society as it is in Nigeria has now included wide range of associations that are involved in shaping the focus and the development of the Nigeria Society. They are now more than ever before playing an intermediary role between the State and its citizens.⁵ Like in any other country the civil Society are expected to balance the strength and influence of the state. The Nigerian civil society has done much to protect citizens from abuses of state power (considering the context within which they operate); and they have tried to remain relevant in their duty to monitor and act like the watchdog of the Country. Nigerian civil society has not been allowed so much to protect the rights of the Nigerian citizens, much is still lacking in the area of freedom of expression and association; in some states like Adamawa more than 85% of the population are still afraid or at least skeptical to join any association; because of the fear that the Government may see them as trouble makers. In Adamawa and Taraba States, and I can talk for some few more states; civil society are not seen quite like channels of popular participation in governance. But, with the present development, it is satisfactory that democracy has opened political space and has quite provoked a civil society renaissance. In other more civilized states changes are positively taking place and to some extent very encouraging. This has been noticed by Moru when he said: "The older, massive, interest-based associations like the trade unions and professional associations have rebuilt their structures and reasserted their former dominance of the political scene. Meanwhile, NGOs have proliferated across the country, and many have begun the process of democratizing their own structures and developing mechanisms of representation and accountability. Some NGOs have also formed coalitions and networks to advance a variety of issues"

¹ . She caught a student who brought the Holy Qur'an into the exam hall and was using the Holy Book to cheat during the Exam.

² Ibrahim was seriously wounded after narrowly escaping with his family. As a result of this disgusting incidence Ibrahim, his wife and children are back to square one; terribly poor with no place to stay.

³ . *Punch News Paper*: May 16th. 2007 page. 12.

⁴ Otonti Nduka, *The roots of African Underdevelopment and other Essays*, Spectrum Books Ltd. Abuja, 2006, p.47.

⁵ These include trade unions; business associations; community-based organizations (CBOs) such as town unions; professional associations like the Bar; ethnic associations; religious institutions; and the vast array of NGOs such as human rights groups, conflict resolution NGOs, women's interests groups, health and education organizations, development NGOs, and son on.

In recognizing what the Civil society has done in the country we can say in the context of Nigeria, that civil society organizing has proved to be the most essential and necessary of social force for change, in terms of the social force that considers the need and the well being of people before whatever interest or any profit considered. For example; it was the civil society groups that compelled the Federal government to keep the price of petrol stable for quite a long time. Such development for us is positive and commendable. One sure way therefore; to move Nigeria forward is to promote and straighten the civil society organizing. We need to encourage civil groups and grass roots movements, and mobilized them in to a strong voice that can speak and bring about positive changes. Nigeria has so much possibility in terms of socio-economic developments mobilization for mass support can be utilized to change things in the country instead of allowing undesirable hooligans to ignite destructive riots in the name of demanding for rights.

Despite all the efforts of the civil society; up to now in Nigeria, the groups are largely marginal players in the affairs of the country, especially at the national.⁶ Moru has stated it in a better way; "...Government has not recognized civil organization and the huge repertoire of knowledge that reside within the sector as good enough to contribute to the development of the Nigeria state. Till date civil groups are treated with disdain, and are often referred to as trouble makers and rubble rousers in the politics of development".⁷

The need to collaborate with the press: The Press has a strategic role to play in developing the civil society as it is an effective weapon in civil society mobilizing. We however still has a long way to go as corruption has not left the media industry out in Nigeria.

The use of the judiciary as an independent and incorruptible organ of civil society as an instrument of development will enhance and sustain our democracy. The respect for the rule of law guarantees peace and stability. It is worth mentioning here that in the recent years the Nigeria judiciary has done very well.

The need to Join together for common goal: What has become necessary for us which is also so important; is the need to advice ourselves to do is seek-out one another to join hand to bring about continues social change in Nigeria.

Considerable number of conflicts and dimensions they usually take many people are of the opinion that most conflicts in Nigeria are essentially the manifestations of poverty and social frustrations. Ustaz Ashafa and Evang. Wuye in their submission on the Nigeria situation acknowledge the fact that even though some conflicts that happen in Nigeria are not of religious nature; they quickly and easily take religious dimension because of the strong ties and affinity for religion of the Nigeria population.⁸

Government official efforts to resolve major conflicts in Nigeria

I would like to acknowledge some efforts of the successive Governments in Nigeria, to resolve some major conflicts in the Country, and to bring about peace, stability and unity. The creation of States and Local governments, was with the intention to satisfy the interest of different groups, especially different agitating ethnic groups, the Federal character commission was intended to play fairness in terms of balancing the issue of employments/appointments to all in Nigeria, National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) was intended to bring about true integration and national unity, which is expected to

⁶ Even at the State Levels they are seriously seen with disdain.

⁷ John Moru, Civil Society and Social Change in Nigeria, p.2

⁸ Ashafa, Ustar Muhammad Nurayn & Wuye, Evang. James Movel. The Pastor and Imam: Perspectives to Conflict. Muslim/Christian Youth Dialogue Forum, Lagos, 1999 p.17

guarantee stability, introduction of Federal unity schools is another effort to integrate the country and to promote tolerance, adopting various formulas of revenue allocation was to reduce tension and experience acceptability, power sharing, the multi-party democracy, imposition of two party system, numerous constitutional conferences, various forms of military rule, relocation of the federal capital from Lagos to Abuja. All these have contributed to certain extent in bringing about unity and peace, but it appears in all, it has generally failed to change the Nigeria situation as expected. Probably it has been operating artificially.

Religious affairs advisory committee was set up by the Federal Government to advise the Federal government on how to go about religious matters. This committee has remained just a name. It has been incapacitated by lack of funding and lack of supporting laws that will make it effective.

The Causes of the conflicts in Nigeria

On the Causes of conflicts in Nigeria I would like to start by making two presentations on Muslim/Christian Dialogue on peace in Jos in two separate statements by similar:

The Christian puts it this way:

"Jesus fought no wars, conquered no earthly kingdoms, commanded no army, yet he rules in the hearts of millions of men and women by his offer of love, reconciliation and peace with God, --- Jesus is the epitome of peace --- Jesus is the prince of peace. Jesus never commanded his followers to go to war for any reason; to the Christians therefore no war is holy if it involves bloodshed."⁹

The Muslim puts his own like this:

"Peace is indeed the most indispensable principle, which Islam deeply plants in the minds of Muslims; peace therefore became part of their nature. The 'word Islam is peace', "--- Islam attach great importance to this value "peace" and that it forms an integral part of the Islamic belief system".¹⁰

That is what Christians and Muslims always voice out in the public whenever they are publicly invited to speak on the position of their respective religions on violence in the country. They still fight and kill each other, destroy properties and displace innocent people? The conclusion of Rev. G. Okezie is that, "war and riots are indication that people are acting according to the wickedness of their evil hearts and not according to the will of the God of peace".¹¹ This leaves us with no much to say, except to say that any person who therefore utters violent or provocative words in the name of propagating religion must be arrested and imprisoned or dealt with according to the law. This is because we should not see the person as either a Christian or a Muslim.¹² Or we have to go back to the drawing board, study all over again; what the religions in Nigeria really mean by peace and where do they get the meaning.

One major thing that has made conflict to persist in Nigeria is the fact that Nigeria- government despite its "official efforts" to control situation it has unofficially knowingly or unknowingly made Nigeria a fertile ground for breeding of all types of conflicts. One writer has observed that the Nigeria government has never had the courage to openly punish perpetrators of such deadly conflicts. It is observed that the Nigeria Governments have always been intimidated by the power of the Northern Nigeria, and for that the Government never challenges most of the religious riots in Northern Nigeria and no serious attempt is made to bring the people to justice. "Nigerian leaders are so much intimidated by the Northern Nigeria. In fact it was becoming too clear that in Nigeria, every

⁹ Dennis Ityavyar & Zacharys Gundu, (ed) Muslim/Christian Dialogue on Peace in Jos, Inter-Gender, Jos 2004p.4

¹⁰ ibid.p.10

¹¹ ibid. p7.

¹² This is because according to Rev. Okezie it is clearly the manifestation of the evil heart. See the last paragraph of page 2

Government that wants to survive and live well, **'the fear of Kaduna Mafia is the beginning of wisdom'** Many people in Nigeria have already observed that whenever religious violence shows its ugly face; Obasanjo does nothing, he either remain silent over it or make a passive statement; unlike in other cases; like that of the Niger Delta where he will promptly respond with a sort of military dispatch.¹³ Obasanjo for example; is mostly criticized for his silence over quite a number of religious issues and religious crisis, results of which has always been outbreak of terrible violence. He was openly condemned for his unconcern attitude on the adoption of sharia in some states in Northern Nigeria. On the adoption of sharia when Obasanjo was informed and advised of what consequent it might hold for the future and the stability of the Country, he was quoted as simply saying, "Sharia will die a natural death".¹⁴

Irresponsible attitude of those who take joy in provocative preaching in Nigeria, and the unconcern attitude of the people towards that, people that are suppose to stop such happenings. Such attitudes give room for the youths to take pleasure in the killing of human beings and destruction of properties continuously.

The issue of provocative public utterances/unguarded public utterances, which is not curtailed or stopped by the government, is another serious threat to peaceful coexistence in Nigeria. Monitoring of such things by government or religious leaders is not there, the government is busy fighting perceived opponents and the Religious leaders are busy making converts. The government and the Religious leaders remain adamant because of the fear of becoming unpopular. Everybody is afraid to say anything unfavorable to his/her religion even if it is the bitter truth.

The attitude of religious groups on certain issues of national interest, which does not help matters, is one aspect of the problem. One example is that of the Miss World Contest. The reaction of Islamic Militants brought a lot of havoc in the Country. The government is not able to take a strong decision on that. In fact, religious militants are growing into an untouchable scaring monsters. The Jos crises for example wouldn't have degenerated into such a deplorable situation if the government was not weak and was able to take a strong, firm and a decisive action. The government was simply weak and was clearly afraid of the perpetrators. In our neighborhood during the last Jos religious upheavals, we had to come out together, joint action to defend our properties. With only sticks in our hands we were able to chase the militants away.

The issue of Islamic **Fatwa** (which is a global problem) is the situation of encouraging as it were someone to go and kill. It is the situation that places the desire to kill the perceived enemy. In this case a sort of prize is being placed on any one that offends the Islamic faith (like desecration) so that anyone who kill the person will be given the amount or its equivalent.¹⁵

The general attitude of Muslims towards Arabic writing: religious or non religious. Muslims treat any writing in Arabic as sacred and the scholars in Nigeria have not been able to educate the public (especially the vulnerable youths) that Arabic is also a language which is spoken by anybody and could be learnt by any person as a language of communication. In Nigeria, ignorance plays a great role here. Imagine you are in a village in Nigeria and happen to pick a note written in Arabic by a friend to another friend that has nothing to do with the Qur'an. May be after reading the note is disgusting and you decide to throw it away, in reaction of the illiterate communities you can be sure of getting the worst beating of your life.

¹³ It is clear that while the Southern part of Nigeria has the problem of ethnic conflicts and resource control, the Northern part has both religious intolerance and ethnic conflicts.

¹⁴ Islam & Violence, Chipla Vandu. P.3. Check out Plse.

¹⁵ The definition of Fatwa is confusing I could not ascertain one, as my time was limited. I am explaining Fatwa here based on others explanations placed on anyone that is able to kill the journalist that drew the cartoon of the Prophet.

Over the years it has become a no go area, a tension point to discuss religious issue in Nigeria; be it local or national level becomes difficult as the reaction of people threatens peace. There was hardly any discussion on religious matters by constitutional conference or National Assembly for the fear of peoples' reaction. There were some attempts but it has never been successful in Nigeria. There is always a high tension, a walk out or outright fighting. This is a serious area of concern to start with. How the country is going to overcome this it is not yet known.

A good observation has been made; that undemocratic political structures, couple with the quest by leaders to suppress oppositions, involving the use of police to repress or coerce the people, and the unnecessary use of force to suppress socio-economic discontents among people, contribute extremely high to violent conflicts.¹⁶

The demand of globalization and its spiritual void-ness has a kind of unconceivable effects on the people apart from the fact that its clear concern to facilitate the profit making and trans-national activities of the multinational corporations. In Nigeria, what we may see is providing abundant land, ignoring the issue of pollution requirements and generally permitting these multinational companies to neglect their social responsibilities to the communities where they operate. Plateau State, Niger Delta are practical examples.¹⁷ Looking at the mining activities of foreign companies in the past, the beautiful landscape of Jos has remain terribly devastated, and it has generated much problems and conflicts for the communities as they now often fight on farming lands.

According to some findings; the unjust world economic system accounts for more than 60% responsibility of African situation. And unless the so called world powers decides to change things – Africa will continue to experience poverty and instead of reducing conflicts and violence it will continue to be on the increase.¹⁸ A report of a conference on Nigeria debt situation mention as one of the main root causes of crisis in Nigeria the following:

An unjust international financial system may continue to create tension and more unidentifiable conflicts.¹⁹

Presently, there are constant terrible impoverishment of the masses which is through the abuse of local government allocation, and this is so constitutionally structured, I am afraid it will continue to be one major cause of civil unrest-fullness and youth restiveness at the local government level. As a Local Government Chairman for three years I have experienced that personally and I can say more of how I feel about the whole thing. The former President of Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON), Late Joseph Jela in 2000, presenting his welcome address during one of the Local Government workshops in Nigeria, clearly confirmed this abuse. I quote him here verbatim; "In our brief stay in office, we discovered that the existing local government system in the country was greatly abused; its voice was muzzled and its plans scuttled." Jela went on and accused the States for making Local Government unsuitable for the desired growth.²⁰

Nigeria Government is aware that in most of the states, especially where worst scenario of conflicts has been experienced; more than 70% of the people are completely illiterates (literally they have not been to school)²¹ The masses of this caliber completely depend on what they are been preached to, and since most Nigerians claim to be people of high penchant for religion they can quickly act irrationally on issues of religious sentiments. They are gullible and can act barbaric and for that they

¹⁶ Police – Community, violence in Nigeria, Centre for Law Enforcement Education (CLEEN) Ikeja – Lagos nd.

¹⁷ Plateau State in Nigeria has been badly devastated as a result of foreign miners of tin. The land can no longer produce, and most areas are water ponds and death traps.

¹⁸ Jan H. Boer, The Church and the External Debt, Institute of Church and Society, Jos: 1990, p.209

¹⁹ *ibid*.

²⁰ Sahid Umar, Grassroot Governance in Nigeria, p.14.

²¹ *ibid*

can cause destruction of the unimaginable type at any little provocation without caring to find out the basis of that. Many selfish politicians and some disgruntle individuals have taken undue advantage of the Nigeria volatile situation.

The “Practice of Religion” in Nigeria is one major problem:

The practice of religion in Nigeria is something completely different from what we might observe in other parts of the world. There is a very strange mode of religious worship that is emerging everyday in Nigeria. I appreciate the strong desire and expression of faith with which Nigerian take religion, as a matter of fact; the real and strong desire has been abused by in sincere and dubious people. The situation is compounded by the fact that there is wide spread of reckless and irresponsible fanatic behavior which could only be best described as psychic religious madness, or outright terrorism hiding behind a kind of disorganized empty pietism in the sphere of religious worship in the Country.²² We have experienced in Nigeria the paradoxical display of religious zeal which most of the time as a result of it we are left with miseries and regrets. The inappropriate competition that exists between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria has raised confused desire in the hearts of many Nigerians; to rather welcome or at least to desire to identify with African traditional religion. It appears wicked people who want to destroy and kill do hide under the umbrella of religious practice. Our mode of worship is prone to violence; the worshipers themselves cannot see that (both Christian & Muslims). Christians make too much noise not caring about the peace of their neighbors and other people who might need some quietness for a cool weekend. Muslims place powerful loudspeakers on top of their worship places they themselves are not able to bear the loudness of the speakers, tapes to all directions and play those tapes to the highest volume not knowing very well that the Mosques are in residential areas. They will put up illegal roadblocks on Fridays. They can halt movements for sometimes and that can provoke many people. People are afraid to complain because of the fear of being called a sinner, unbeliever.

On the issue of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria inter-gender²³ has clearly explained the dimension and forms conflicts are now taking in Nigeria.²⁴

“In Nigeria, more than ever before, differences based on ethnicity and religious beliefs are becoming more nearly drawn and redrawn. The return to democratic rule has opened up the possibility of individual and group expressions, people now define their world in “we versus them” terms and this has heightened the growth of violent conflicts across the country in the realization of the ideology being promoted. These conflicts are predominantly over issues of religious seclusion, ethnic superiority, boundary, status and political appointments. They have predictably led to several violent eruptions with resultant colossal loss of life and property across the nation”.²⁵

“The incidence of poverty has increased, from 28.1 percent in 1980 – 20% in 1997 according to Otonti Nduka”.²⁶

Politicizing of Governments Institutions/Agents: Governments are sometimes politicized and used against opponents. This has serious effects on the civil society. EFCC & ICPC were all politicized and used to fight opponents. It is also like setting up an institution, corrupting it and deceiving the public that it an institution that is fighting corruption. There was no reason for Ribadu to collect N5, 000,000

²² So many religious Sects (especially in Christianity) originated from Nigeria to spread into other countries of the world.

²³ An advocacy programme for peace in Jos

²⁴ There is the need to set up a new radio station that will influence the public in Nigeria by providing balance information that will promote peaceful co-existence.

²⁵ Inter-Gender is a programme of advocacy for peace in Kaduna and Plateau States, led by Prof. Denis Ityaryar who is the Executive of the program.

²⁶ Otonti Nduka, The roots of African Underdevelopment and other Essays, Spectrum Books Ltd. Abuja, 2006, p.47.

from USA; EFCC does not need one penny from anywhere to fight corruption in Nigeria. For him to complain that he has no enough money to fight corruption is to show that they are defeated right from the beginning.²⁷ In fact we should even accused the US government that gave the money as deliberately punishing the poor masses. It is better to use this money to support NGOs that are having programmes affecting the poor directly. One of the failures was that mostly; opponents were picked. They were involved in sponsoring impeachments of State Governors. The pursuance of the State Governors while still in office is a failure known right from the start, because Ribadu is aware that they have immunity.

The issue of Mafias in the country: Talking about mafia Dr. Ayochia made mention of Kaduna Mafia and described and referred to the Kaduna Mafia as “financially powerful, politically conscious, ambitious and even vicious group”. Kaduna Mafia is a problem to the poor masses in Nigeria, and as long as they continue to exist, the poor man will continue to get poorer; it is a sort of deeply rooted structured corruption, planted by the British Colonial Administration.²⁸ That is why former Governor of former Gongola State Col. Yohanna Madaki has to say that, if he could have his way, he would exhume Lord Lugards’ remains from the grave, because Lugard was the person who betrayed the peasants, particularly in the North, otherwise the common man wouldn’t have been suffering like this.²⁹

In 1973, General Yakubu Gowon a Military head of State Exhibited clearly his fear for the powerful north when he could not withstand the ferocity of the criticisms of the faceless mafia he has to change his position on the participation of women in election in Nigeria.³⁰

The extent of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria:³¹

In Nigeria, ethnic conflicts has some most disturbing connotations and it is sometimes easily perceived as the product of a struggle for power and wealth among members of constituent ethnic groups, lack of proper management of which usually explode into destructive violence, but most of the people in the rural communities as far as I know struggle for survival, unless someone somewhere is using or manipulating them for his/her end. ‘Ethnic conflict in Nigeria is also the product of the political or administrative policy of divide-and-rule that mobilized and manipulated ethnic consciousnesses.³² The main problem with the Nigeria society is that whatever problem, conflict or crisis, it can quickly get religious coloration in no time.³³

1. The maitatsine³⁴ riot in Yola (1984) claimed more than 1,000 people died, and more than 3,000 rendered homeless, still more than 100 million naira worth of properties mercilessly destroyed.
2. The Jukun–Tiv ethnic Conflict in the 1990’s which claimed more than 2,000 lives, more than 4,000 people rendered homeless & some people badly wounded, millions of naira worth properties destroyed.

²⁷ Saturday Independent May 19, 2007, page A2.

²⁸ Bala Takay (Ed) & Souni Gevanle Tyoden, The Kaduna Mafaia: A study of the rise, development and consolidation of Nigeria power elite Jos University Press, Jos 1987, p.125.

²⁹ Appollos E. Bitrus, Madaki – Symbol of Justice, Challenge Press, Jos. nd. p.24.

³⁰ Dennis & Nancy N. Political Participation of Nigeria Women 1960 – 2000, Inter-Garden, Jos, 2002, p.12.

³¹ In my personal research I have recorded not less than 50 different destructive conflicts that have serious negative impact on the Country stability, time and space will not allow me to list them all, besides the fact that some of these conflicts are so sensitive and cannot be mentioned anyhow.

³² Check out for the reference asap

³³ Suwukumfakenni Charles Bansi, Conflicts in Nigeria: Socio-Political Dimensions, Unpublished paper presented at the National Conference on Christian Muslim Dialogue at Ganye Paradise Motel 1994. P.2

³⁴ Maitatsine is an Islamic Sect (zealots) or group that is well known for its act of destruction in the name of purifying the society or religion.

3. The 1st & 2nd deadly conflicts in Numan; destroyed more than 800 lives, 2,000 casualties & properties destroyed.
4. The inter-ethnic conflict in Ganye between Chamba farmers & Fulani cattle settlers killed up to 6 people. Police station was later consequently destroyed (burnt) and properties destroyed in another separate violence.
5. The Jos crisis claimed more than 1,500 lives, Churches & houses destroyed. The number of displaced people was not accurately estimated, but was certainly large in number. The Bauchi State Government resettles not less 500 people
6. The Gombe religious crisis claimed so many lives and properties. So many people displaced.
7. Bauchi religious crisis claimed so many people, so many Churches destroyed.
8. The Zangon Kataf Ethnic Conflict claimed so many lives – millions of naira-worth properties destroyed.
9. Riot over the Miss World Pageant claimed more than 200 people.
10. The issue of cartoon of Prophet Mohammed ignited deadly violence in many states in Nigeria, where more than 300 people lost their lives. A friend of mine whom we graduated together from the Seminary lost everything. His Church building and the Pastorium were burnt to ashes, and he narrowly escaped death after almost being hacked to death.
11. The Wase Communities mostly the places we are working with in Plateau State were destroyed as a result of ethnic conflict (Fulani and Tarok). The villages were destroyed and most of them cease to exist.

We can go on and on, in Nigeria to mention even more deadly conflicts that has almost tore Nigeria into pieces. These destructive conflicts are almost becoming a normal thing in Nigeria. It doesn't disturb some people much anymore.

A Proposal for A Way Forward

Considering the lost of lives and the destruction of properties it is necessary to say in the words of Francis Cardinal Archue that inter-religious cooperation in the emerging situation is not optional. Cardinal Archue writes:³⁵ "The emerging situation calls for joint action of people from different religions to promote justice and peace, to reduce or eliminate tension and extremism and to defend human dignity, and human rights, especially as regards to life and family. Inter-religious cooperation is not optional".³⁶

Since most of the conflicts in Nigeria; be it political or ethnic it usually end up bearing religious coloration and it becomes between two religious, there is need to give a closer watch or study of the two religions. There must be a serious deliberation on the issue of religion in Nigeria. How these two religions and any other religion should operate. Any religious group that abuses its freedom, the Nigerian government must be strong enough to ban it or arrest and bring to justice those involved.

³⁵ Quoted by Ipe Joseph

³⁶ Peace & reconciliation: Asian-African Inter-faith, partnership perspective p.33

Some key decisions and guidelines on religious issues in relation to public interest must be made very clear and strict methods to observe must be put in place to ensure strict compliance.

After I personally interview quite a number of people in Nigeria; they are mostly of the opinion that a hard decision has to be made against religious groups in Nigeria: for example any religious group that starts a violent act or demonstration must be made to pay the cost of destruction made as a result of their action. Failure of which should result in the banning of that religion.

Religious freedom does not mean interfering into the life or the peacefulness of other people: Nigerian Muslims and Christians are fun of polluting the atmosphere with sound through use of powerful loud speakers, which is mostly needlessly used without any control. These are some of the things that provoke anger and stimulate violent act. There must be serious restriction or strong law against that. There is also blocking of access roads on worships days. The same decisions should apply.

All religious Pilgrimages to all Holy places must be left in the hands of each religion. The government should leave every religious issue to each religion. Or there must be a Ministry of religious Affairs empowered to address all religious issues from the perspective of justice. This must be in line with equity and fair play.

Where there are structures or establishments in respect to religious – ethnic groups, and are not functioning; this must be studied and the results must be taken seriously.

For us to be comfortable and safe in Nigeria, the government should direct the activity of every religion to be as transparent as possible. Every thing must be made public (as much as possible) for public verification and scrutiny. Or on the other hand, Nigeria government should be completely free from religious affiliations and should make every religion completely independent and should strongly re-emphasize her secularity nature as much as she can. The government should make it clear to every religion, her limitations and possibilities in the country. The government should make it abundantly clear as matter of decision where religion starts and where it ends in public life.

Christian-Muslim Mutual Relations

Various programmes, which will bring together Christians-Muslims together, should be continuously promoted. Communities could be brought together and be encouraged to jointly embark on quite a number of activities/projects. To diffuse emerging signs of conflicts; Conflicts flash points should be sought and identified, marked and provided with a joint project where there will be engaged to participate in such a project of joint economic interest. They should also be given opportunities to embark on an exchange visits. Making communities to accept visiting each other's camp to see what the opponent is passing through creating a situation of heart feeling generating empathetic atmosphere.

Adult Education & Literacy Programme: More than 70% of the Nigerian populations are illiterates, so why don't we make adult education a priority programme? So that as we provide opportunity for the community members to learn how to read and write, we also take advantage of their coming together to provide ecumenical education, draw their attention on some critical social and religious issues that has to be taken seriously in order to promote togetherness and unity, and clearly discourage divisions.

There is every need to all civil organizations in Nigeria to put in place a reliable mechanism of ensuring justice. The effort of ensuring justice bestows peoples' confidence in the process of conflict resolution. We are all aware of the fact that to attain sustainable peace; the issue of justice has a great role to play. Our concern for peace is just not when we stop people from violent act, but how they leave continuously together with necessary possibilities to handle their crisis the best way they can. There is a serious need to emphasize peace promotion to avoid the "fire brigade approach", which the Nigerian government is used to.

The **Poksum**³⁷ Programme of JPRM: This is the idea of bringing together conflicting communities or communities that have signs or pointers to eradicate conflicts. They are brought to engage in a social or entertainment programme, which will make them discuss naturally and willingly. Certain difficult and sensitive issues are brought forward and talked away but in a lighter mood. The result of this type of free and natural discussion is used later as the basis of further discussions at conferences and dialogue programmes. The programme is made so informal with so specific topics known to the attendance, and the attendance is not officially controlled. It is the programme officer that knows which issues are to be brought forward and which issues to leave out.

Dialogue for Peaceful Change: This is a form of a formal ways of peace programme, which JPRM has just newly adopted from Oikosnet. At the moment we have made it an integral part of the peace building/promotion programme. This is as a result of our participation in the peace network of the Association of Christian Lay Centres in Africa (ACLCA). A meeting is set, and certain learnt skills are adopted to facilitate the discussion. Dialogue for Peaceful Change (Dpc) is presently adopted and applied by members of the global Oikosnet, which JPRM is member through ACLCA.

Visiting Conflicting Communities, Meeting with victims, advocacy call on strategic leaders' and prominent opinion leaders forms essential aspect of peace promotion activities. Also taking every step possible to visit those considered troublesome or "tough and dangerous "³⁸

The need to resuscitate and integrate African traditional method of conflict resolution in the widely Western Method is now seriously lauded by WANEP, ACLCA Peace Network etc. The call to resuscitate the African traditional method of conflict resolution is necessitated by the present fact that globalization pose enormous challenges to Nigeria and African communities at large, especially its spiritual void-ness. Wanep call it "**Trado-African Conflict Resolution Methods**"³⁹

In Africa the participation of the community in resolving issues or conflicts is very essential. The Chamba people refer to that as **Mumpirikenen**. The issue of resolving conflict in the trado-African methods makes it impossible to handle it as an individual issue. In the present dispensation the issue of involving many actors is an essential aspect of attaining sustainable peace.

In the African setting the issue of educating the Children on the traditional knowledge of peace is always mandatory. The other aspect is that when children are also taught who and who to fear and who to they must try to remain at peace. Nowadays we lack peace education in our school syllabuses. Children and the youths hardly have anytime from home to learn about peace. The culture of peace is less promoted. It is in view of this that JPRM has great emphasis on peace education in her 41 adult education classes. JPRM has emphasized peace education as an important aspect of sustainable society and community.

³⁷ Poksum is a Chamba (one of the major ethnic groups in Adamawa State in Nigeria) word for sitting together old, young women girls to discuss in the most traditional way and very informal free and entertaining to resolve conflicts, reconcile people and draw up together modalities to prevent future occurrences new conflicts, or, how such conflicts could be managed in the simplest way. This method has proved to be very effective in our situation in Adamawa and Jos.

³⁸ Sometimes certain people in the Society are referred to as un approachable because they are perceived as "tough and dangerous" but at times the solution of the problems lies with them, and meeting them can end the whole problem.

³⁹ Refer to the Doc. No.3

It has been observed that one of the main reasons for constant religious and ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria especially in Northern Nigeria, and consequent set back has been “--- the unnecessary manipulation of superficial differences such as ethnic and religious divergences.”⁴⁰

Declare a Decade of Nonviolence in Nigeria: To effectively understand the Nigerian context of the Ethno-Religious Conflicts and to formulate lasting solutions, there is need to organize biannual (well planned) inter-ethnic and inter-religious conference, down to earth presentations, but brought down to the level of the average Nigeria. This should continue for a decade. A committee that will work full time for that and will do no other work other than the planning and coordinating the conference activities, sharing and distributing the outcome of the conference. It must be a free and frank, safe and secured conference. Such conference has already been sounded in the publication of Dr. Ityavyar.⁴¹

On the issue of poverty, there is no alternative; something just has to be done to alleviate Nigerians from poverty. If the developed countries don't see a call necessary, they will have to see it necessary one day when they are able to see the nuisance the country will constitute when they are pushed to the wall. There is a Hausa saying that goes “*wanda ya kwana lafiya shi ya so*” The poor masses in Nigeria has nothing doing and they must survive, so how do they survive, they must find themselves something to eat, it is a must, so sometimes when they are pressed, committing a crime becomes a wise decision to safe your life. Ayida in his submission on Nigeria explains this; “There is too much human misery around. The emisceration⁴² of the rural poor and the pulverization of urban dwellers are demonstrated in the apparent lack of collective will to survive, has gone too far. It is difficult to imagine how the urban poor survive today.”⁴³

Conclusion

It is a biblical exhortation that we must “Depart from evil, and we must do good; we must seek peace, and we must pursue it” (Ps 34:14) Peter making reference to the position of the Psalmist against evil has to make it very clear for the followers that if anyone love life let him/her turn away from evil, let him turn away from evil, and do good; Let him seek peace, and pursue it (1Pe 3:11). It is enough to advice Nigerian Preachers/religious leaders, public figures to listen to the above message of the scripture.

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“Poverty is responsible for many evils; poverty is defined in the dictionary as absence of everything that makes a person happy”.⁴⁴ If that is the case we must tackle poverty and ensure that every one is at least comfortable in terms of what to eat. The Mission of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth was very clear: He was anointed to preach the good news to the poor, to proclaim the freedom of the captives, the recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the down trodden and to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord (Lk.4: 18). We have made the mission of Christ so difficult in many parts of the world by our oppressive economic policies. Instead of us to set free the down trodden we have entangle them in a wicked system and the downtrodden are still crying because of the shackles of poverty that we have put on them. If we are Godly people I think time is over due for us to use all our wealth sacrifice our enjoyments to set free the people that are enslave with the shackles of poverty.

⁴⁰ Appollos. E. Bitrus, Madaki – Symbol of Justice, Challenge Press, (Jos. Nd) p.7.

⁴¹ Dennis Ityavyar, Zacharys Gundu, State holders in Peace & Religious Conflicts Plateau & Kaduna, Nigeria, Inter-Gender, 2006, p.57.

⁴² I am using it here assuming that it has been used to explain the act of making people live in miseries.

⁴³ Allison A. Ayida, Rise & Fall of Nigeria, Malthouse Press Limited, Lagos, 1990, p.9.

⁴⁴ Denis Ityavyar & others, Advocacy for Peace, p.89.

Once more I would still like to refer to another reference of the Bible. "There must be no poor among you" How do we understand this? How do we explain this to ourselves in this world? Are we all people of God? Or do we just look at issues only within our exclusive camps? If we are all one people of God then we must listen to the cries of people from around the world. The Bible is aware of the consequence of having the poor among you. If you continue with your unjust economic structures and destructive monetary policies, you will continue to have more and more poor people among the nations of the world. And the more they are growing in number the more you will continue to have restlessness.

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23/07 Nigeria: Too Rich for Dignity and the Law?

Perspectives after the 2007 elections

International Conference, June 15 to 17, 2007

In co-operation with Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC), Church Development Service (EED), German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) Nigeria, Heinrich Boell Foundation, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, sponsored by Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Berlin

Subject

Nigeria, the demographically largest country with the most extensive oil resources in Africa has become an important power in the region despite its conflict-ridden history. Economic interests dominating the use of resources from outside, large-scale poverty stirring ethnic-religious rivalries about social and political participation, and also disparate structures of government, administration and the security sector have created complex tensions between controversial perspectives of the stakeholders involved.

The ways in which Nigeria will enable itself to deal with the causes of the conflicts make the country an important case of scholarly and political interest far beyond its borders.

Short after the local and federal elections in Nigeria in April 2007, the conference aims at discussing the following issues: How to empower the various segments of the Nigerian population, politically and economically, enhance good governance, fight rampant corruption, conduct appropriate methods of conflict resolution and implement conflict-sensitive codes of conduct for international corporations? How much responsibility, in close cooperation with Nigerian players, for a policy focussed on human security, peace and justice may be assumed by external governmental and non-governmental initiatives?

Our hope is to provide a forum for Nigerian players such as politicians, scholars and analysts along with representatives of civil society to discuss their views with German and international organisations involved in development and conflict resolution. We encourage people with expertise in these fields to share their knowledge and to help identify future areas of cooperation.

Dr. Corinna **Hauswedell**, Director of Studies for International Politics

Program

Friday, June 15, 2007

Welcome and opening of the conference

Dr. Corinna **Hauswedell**, Loccum

Nigeria After the Elections

Introductions to the conference

Prof. Attahiru **Jega**, Präsident, Bayero Universität Kano

Heinrich **Bergstresser**, Journalist, Köln

World Order - Africa - Nigeria

Dr. Denis **Tull**, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin

Saturday, June 16, 2007

Representative of the Nigerian Embassy in Germany

Introductions to the Workshops

Federalism, Governance and Security

Prof. Dr. J. Isawa **Elaiwu**, Jos

Responsible Use of Resources

Bunu **Lawan**, Principal Accountant, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Abuja

Ethnic-religious Dimensions of Political Conflicts

Prof. Dr. Klaus **Hock**, University Rostock

Workshop I: Democracy and Security - Issues of Participatory Governance

Chair: Dr. Andreas **Heinemann-Grüder**, BICC, Bonn

Prof. Attahiru **Jega**, Vice Chancellor, Bayero University, Kano

Ibrahim **Biu**, Director Voter Education, Independent National Electoral Commission Headquarters (INEC), Abuja

Heinz **Jockers** / Ralph-Michael **Peters**, Core-Team, European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM), Hamburg

Dr. Etham **Mijah**, Nigerian Defense Academy, Kaduna (to be confirmed)

Olufunmi **Olayinka**, Deputy Governor candidate for Ekiti State, Lagos

Dr. Klaus **Pähler**, Representative to Nigeria, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Abuja

Workshop II: Too Much of Plenty - Too Little to Share?

Issues of Responsible Resource Use and Economic Development

Chair: Kristina **Steenbock**, German Watch, Berlin

Abbia **Udofia**, Chief Legal Officer, Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), Abuja

David **Ugolor**, African Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, Lagos

Dr. Rose **Ngomba**, University of Göttingen, Germany

Dr. Stefan **Cramer**, Director, Heinrich Boell Foundation, Lagos

Dr. Andreas **Dally**, Academy Loccum

Yahaya **Ahmed**, Development Association for Renewable Energies Kaduna, Bonn

Workshop III: Beyond North and South - Ethnic, Religious and Social Dimensions of Conflict

Chair: Dr. Lidwina **Meyer**, Academy Loccum

Ms Hauwa **Ibrahim**, Abuja

Rev. Habila **Istifanus**, General Secretary of ACLA; Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Movement, Jos

Rev. Ike **Okorie**, General Secretary, Christian Council of Churches in Nigeria, Lagos

Fr. Dr. George **Ehusani**, former General Secretary, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Lagos

Dr. Nick **Idoko**, Centre for Peace in Africa, Lagos

Future Perspectives I:

How do the different players in Nigeria articulate, position themselves and co-operate on the issues at stake?

Round table feedback from the workshops

Facilitator: Dr. Corinna **Hauswedell**

Sunday, June 17, 2007

Future Perspectives II:

How to address a policy focussed on human security, peace and justice through external initiatives and in close cooperation with Nigerian players?

Panel discussion

Facilitator: Dr. Corinna **Hauswedell**

Dr. Viktor **Matz**, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Berlin

Gabriele **Groneberg**, MP/Social Democratic Party, Berlin

Hartwig **Fischer**, MP/Christian Democratic Union, Berlin

Bunu **Lawan**, ECOWAS

Dapo **Oyewole**, Centre for African Policy & Peace Strategy (CAPPS), London & Lagos