

Unfortunately, the situation in Nigeria remains precarious, at least in the predominantly Christian regions of the middle belt; plateau, Adamawa, Taraba, Nasarawa and some parts of Benue states.

In Taraba state for instance, more than 8,500 people were displaced from their home in attacks in at least 11 villages, namely Murkunu, Murtia, Yaukani, Murbai, Yawai, Somporo, Jekunhou, Sembe, Ndayaro, Kaudad, and Keshabro in Jalingo and Ardo-Kola local councils. More than 50 people were killed last week alone in these attacks by Fulani cattle herdsman.

In Bassa Local government Council, 17 people were killed in what is a strategic 'subsistence killings' where families, church leaders, community heads and people who tend to condemn the government or security agents' inaction are targeted. The attacks and killings are not mass killings to attract to much attention, but the tally keeps growing. Last week a man, Thomas Wollo, 46, and his son, Nggwe Thomas, 7 year old, were killed and the Fulani beheaded them in Tafigana village in Bassa local council, to strike terror in the community and send a message. That same killed a pregnant woman in the nearby Ancha community, on Sunday 21st July.

The forceful take-over of villages, farming lands and communities in Plateau around Riyom, Barkin Ladi and Bokkos local councils has continued unabated by both government and security forces. In this farming season, the herdsman go into farms and destroy farmlands, simply to ensure that the Christian farmers have no access to their farms and cannot produce food. Videos online, in Nigeria are available where the Fulani brazenly threaten these communities.

In the predominantly Christian communities in southern Kaduna state, at least 300 people were killed between February and June this year. Many are still in refugee camps or displaced and living with relatives in other villages and cannot go back to their communities. Even when they attempt doing so, they are attacked and killed in when they attempt to do so.

In Borno state, Boko Haram continues to wreak havoc around the predominantly Christian communities of Chibok, Gwoza, Lassa, Benishek and in Adamawa State, around Madagali to Mubi and borders surrounding Adamawa state. People from Chibok and Danboa are unable to travel to Maiduguri, about two hours drive, because Boko Haram still controls a large chunk of the territory, contrary to claims by the military that the jihadists have no control over land in the northeast. I could not travel on that road late June when I was there.

While it is on record that the Nigerian government, in its planned policy to assist people and communities affected by the Boko haram jihad and Fulani herdsman attacks has put on some type of stipend, thousands of people in Borno state, these payments are skewed toward giving mostly Muslim in the state while Christian suffer discrimination and predominantly Christians get nothing. At least 50 Christians I interacted with in my trip to Maiduguri late June, said none of them or people in their communities have gotten anything at all from the scheme, actually no one has met or told them about any assistance at all but monthly they see thousands of Muslims lined up at the United Bank for Africa (UBA) collecting cash and all of them are holding certain cards given by the government.

Former president Olusegun Obasanjo, in the last week or so, had to write an open letter to President Buhari,(<https://punchng.com/full-text-of-obasanjos-open-letter-to-buhari/>)

) warning of impending conflict and possible disintegration of the country if the current situation of killings, kidnappings and attacks on communities continue.

Matters arising

Refugees, especially in Plateau, Adamawa, Taraba and Borno states have been in displaced people's camps, some for between seven to ten years now. Their lands have been forcefully taken away and their livelihood destroyed.

We are now breeding a generation of children, in the middle belt and north-eastern region who know nothing but violence. And the federal and state governments are reluctant to stop the killings and provide justice and closure to the victims of the violence. We are now having communities arming themselves and establishing their own armed groups. This is one of the indications of a failed state. The perpetual violence is breeding anarchy, like the former president says and where people become their own authorities and their own laws, it is just a matter of time that they will soon go out of control. When that happens, as we see in DR Congo and Sierra Leone, the tragedy will be unspeakable.

The British government must encourage the Nigerian government to restructure its constitution and the country to reflect a true federal system where people have rights and are able to contribute to the growth of their communities rather than the unitary government carved out by military dictatorship in 1999. These include state police and clear cut state local council autonomy and regional identities in a clear constitutional reform.

The country has grown to about 200 million people with continuously expanding needs, interests and challenges in the midst of governments inability to cope and provide the basic necessities, there is an urgent need to restructure the political arrangement to meet urgent developmental needs regions.

The British government must continue to demand clear account of its funding of projects and programmes in Nigeria and ensure that these funds are not skewed to favour any particular religion, regional or political interest.

Looking at Nigeria's regional map alone and the hotspots of the country will clearly show the predominance of the attacks calculated and targeted in these regions which are predominantly Christian. Questions need to be asked about the claims by the Nigerian security forces about manpower to fight the insurgency and Fulani attacks. Why will only a select group of military officers in a task force fight the menace threatening the unity of a country while many more officers are in the barracks and policemen running around rich and influential people as body guards. Why is the task force an exclusive group of security forces answerable only to the president and chief army officers?

The Miyetti Allah cattle breeders Association, the political pressure group controlling the Fulani cattle herdsman, who president Buhari is a patron and a member, have admitted to the killings and attack in several villages in the middle belt region of the country. Their admission and reasons for attacks have been published in local media. The British government needs to know who their sponsors are and why the specific targeting of Christian farming communities. Former president Obasanjo in his open letter about three months ago called it the "Fulanisation" agenda of the present government to annex land for the nomadic Islamic tribe. Obasanjo's warning needs to be taken seriously as a former military general and head of state and a former president.

