

WHILE NIGERIA BLEEDS AND BURNS

A Press Statement by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) on the current state of Nigeria, given on September 18th 2014.

Our Second Annual Plenary meeting in Warri Diocese, Delta State, has been daily strained by first-hand and horrifying reports reaching us from Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Taraba, Kano and Kaduna states about the mass slaughter of fellow Nigerians; the burning and sacking of whole villages and churches and rectories. Families and individuals are forced to seek places of refuge outside their invaded homes and lands.

In fact, one of our bishops from those zones of current tragedy had to leave our meeting abruptly because of thousands of refugees that had flocked to his Cathedral and its premises expecting protection and feeding from the bishop and his diocese. Unfortunately, the situation right now, in the North East, Nigeria only confirms further killings, burnings and fleeing of defenseless Nigerians creating a heightened sense of unrest and siege for the whole nation.

As Nigeria tragically bleeds and burns, we Bishops are really alarmed at the scale of human, material destruction, and the disruption of village and community life with increased levels of hatred and potentials for more conflicts in the nation. While Muslims are sometimes targets of these destructive attacks, Christians, Churches and non- Muslims in general are the principal targets for extermination, expropriation and expulsion by the Boko Haram insurgents, the perpetrators of all these destructions.

We believe that we still have governments- at Federal and State- levels whose primary duty it is to preserve and protect the life of every Nigerian irrespective of tribe, religion, social class or tradition.

In the face of this Boko Haram group and other criminal militias arming themselves beyond our legitimate government and brazenly killing innocent, defenseless citizens, our government must do more than it is currently doing to safeguard our lives and defend our nation. It must do more than it is currently doing to fight off and disarm these actual destroyers of Nigerians and Nigeria. It must do more than it is currently doing to prevent segments of our nation from drifting into anarchy and mutual self-destruction and bring criminals to justice.

We warn every Nigerian community at local and state levels to be alert to the grave danger facing all of us and our nation from within and from without. The issue is not about who becomes president or governor or senator after the 2015 General Elections. The issue is about the life and security of every one of us who loves his or her life and really cares about our living together in peace as noble Nigerians.

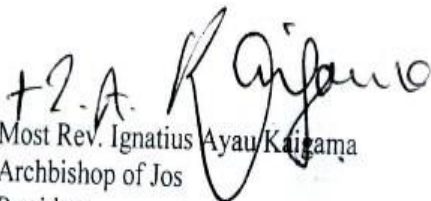
We urge therefore that we all support and encourage every positive effort by the current government to protect every Nigerian and defend the integrity and unity of Nigeria. Let us equally take lawful measures locally to prevent the destruction of fellow Nigerians and to ward off Nigeria's destroyers.

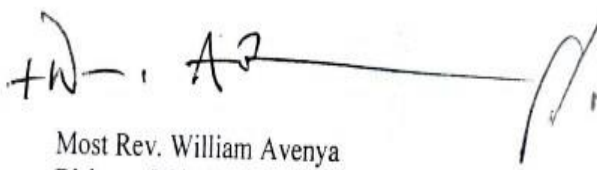
We have mandated our CARITAS (charity/emergency) office to immediately provide funds and succor to all affected peoples as is within our capacity.

We urge government and every endowed Nigerian to reach out in charity and solidarity to rehabilitate and support our displaced brothers and sisters wherever they are and so sustain our God-given human dignity.

In keeping with our calling as religious leaders, we Bishops of Nigeria have resolved to organize a national all night prayer scheduled for 13th and 14th November, 2014 at Abuja.

These are critical times for our country and everyone in position of authority must do everything possible to save our dear country, Nigeria.


Most Rev. Ignatius Ayau Kaigama
Archbishop of Jos
President


Most Rev. William Avenya
Bishop of Gboko
Secretary

