

Appendix 45:

BZ Security and Compensation Issues

Jan H. Boer, 2007

Nigerians, both Christians and Muslims, have long lived under a sense of insecurity. It is discussed in Appendix 6 and xxxx. Both groups continually accuse the FG and various state governments of intervening too late in riots and, in fact, of intentional delaying tactics so that the perpetrators were given the opportunity to achieve their violent goals. This report on security covers the BZ period, while the Christian security concerns during the AZ era are treated in Chapter 4 under the heading “Security and Compensation Issues.”

As far as the *core North* was concerned, according to Muslim writers as well as Lieutenant Governor Mr. Palmer agreed with each other that the pre-colonial security situation was better than that of even the early colonial period. Palmer admitted that “it is lamentably impossible to deny that in Hausa-land the incidents of crime...had grown worse instead of better since the British occupation.”¹

. It is interesting to note that an early missionary in the *Middle Belt* observed the very opposite trend in the Middle Belt during the initial days of colonialism. Lowry Maxwell, a missionary of the Sudan United Mission in Ibi, now Taraba State, wrote in October, 1910, that the terrible pre-colonial conditions were greatly improving under colonialism. “The roads were made safe to travel, robbery was repressed, tribal warfare was put a stop to, and justice was more or less made an easy thing to obtain.” It had become possible for farmers to build small houses on their farms, away from the towns and cities. “Formerly, all the people had to live inside towns owing to fear of raiders.” The difference can possibly be accounted for by the fact that colonialism had stopped Muslim slave raids into the Middle Belt. “Peace is now brooding over the land,” an impossible claim for the Middle Belt during the pre-colonial slave-raiding days.² Those raids did not take place in Hausaland, where Palmer observed order and peace, but they did originate there and caused the chaos that colonialism corrected by stopping the raids.

¹J. Boer, 2005, vol 4, p. 99.

²J. Boer, 1979, p.149; 1984, pp. 47-48.

While sharia law may have prevented chaos in Hausaland and common law created it there, the situation in the Middle Belt was the exact opposite: Sharia in the core North created chaos in the Middle Belt, while common law brought order and peace.

Way back in 1987. TEKAN made a submission to a panel that was to investigate the Kafanchan riot³ in which it called for the removal of the Kaduna Governor, Commissioner of Police, Army Commander and Director of the State Secret Service! As long as these people remained in office, “the investigation will not be able to come out with the truth of their behaviour, to expose their role and to determine how far the non-interference by the security forces encouraged the rioters. It is important that the mystery surrounding the inaction of the authorities be unravelled.” TEKAN thought to detect a “hidden conspiracy” that included traditional rulers. She also called for an investigation into the involvement of students at tertiary institutions and suspected that they were being manipulated “by certain groups of powerful individuals for personal ends.” “The government must come out clearly on this issue.”⁴

In the same 1987 TEKAN publication, Oyeniran of UGCAN voiced the same demands. . He realized that “very powerful pressure groups and individuals, under the guise of religion, are intent on destabilising the nation.” Over against that, he extended his “sincere admonition to the FG to ensure that justice is done.” This was to include “adequate reparation equally to all affected” as well as government guarantee of “safety of lives and property irrespective of tribe, status or religious belief.” Law enforcement agencies were “to be more vigilant and impartial.”⁵

Again, in 1994, TEKAN and ECWA together published a press release that dealt with a number of issues, including the violence in Potiskum, Yobe State, in that year.⁶ The churches demanded from both the FD and Yobe State Government that they “arrest and deal decisively with the Potiskum rioters.” This particular cry was about a riot in the distant past, but no riot or violence has occurred since that did not generate these same demands. The demand had an additional angle that is always tied to that of security, namely the issue of compensation for destroyed properties. Owners of such properties must receive adequate compensation from the

³For details of the riot see J. Boer, 2003, vol. 1, pp. 50-55. The report is listed in the Bibliography, but references to it in this chapter are all to the pagination of TEKAN’s *Towards the Right Path*, where it has been republished. It also constitutes Appendix 3 in vol. 3.

⁴TEKAN, 1987, pp. 57-58.

⁵A. Oyeniran, 1987, p. 67.

⁶For information about this riot, see vol. 1, 2003, pp. 89-92.

government.⁷ The cry for security and compensation became almost a litany from the hearts of the people year in, year out.

Only a few months later, Anglican Bishop Ogbonyomi of Kaduna complained about “the failure, neglect and refusal of government to stop the continuing assault and brutalisation of Christian lives and property” and charged that it was “deliberate and part of a well-designed scheme of systematic elimination of Christians and Christianity. CAN has done everything humanly possible to restrain its members from retaliation, but threatened that it had got to a situation where we have to react.” He said, “The voice of caution has its limits. Whatever will happen is dependent on how promptly and sincerely government moves into action over the matter.” “Christian patience has been tasked.” Kano CAN Secretary, James Sylvester, threatened that it was not “proper to tell you what we shall do now. But just watch.” All this is found in an article in which it is claimed that Muslims had become more violent at the time. The increasing violence was to forestall the threats of a Saudi prince and philanthropist to stop supporting Nigerian Muslims and even organize an international boycott of support for them, if they did not wake up and stop the Christian advance in Nigeria. The article gave quite a number of examples of an increase in attacks on Christian leaders. In such a context, Christian leaders warned especially the FG that Christian patience was running out. The time has come for the FG to act decisively.⁸

Matthew Kukah asked what it would take for the country to “move ahead.” The answer, he explained, related “to the state’s abdication of its duty to its citizens.” “Nigeria has really done nothing to make us feel we are its citizens.” The Government has “abdicated its responsibility to a tiny but rather vocal minority” that “thrives under chaos and havoc.” “It is crisis that gives them a blood line.”⁹

Isaiah Ilo gave us an early pathetic insecurity scene in Zaria during May, 1992. Soldiers had been called in to put an end to the violence “Muslim fanatics” had waged there. As peace seemed to have returned and people were once again going about their normal routines, a riot broke out in the city’s Federal Prison that ended up with a massacre and the prison burned down. “That night it was all anxiety or fear about possible attacks. Families were not sure they would wake up alive at dawn, as homes had been set ablaze before with petrol sprays, while the people

⁷TEKAN/ECWA, 31 Dec/94.

⁸L. Ikpa and P. Andrew, 13 Apr/95.

⁹M. Kukah, 24 Feb/94.

slept.” Ilo commented, “Now this type of tense living is not restricted to Zaria. It is no exaggeration to say that all over the North, the existing situation between Muslims and non-Muslims is that of simmering tension, mutual suspicion and alleged preparations against an expected day when mutual slaughter will be sparked off.” He reported that President Babangida promised to “beef up security by granting special emergency powers and expediting the setting up of the National Guard as a crack force to quell riots with dispatch.”

Nigerians, according to Ilo, would be much happier if Babangida had pledged that his government will henceforth ensure that tacit support is no longer given the perpetrators of religious intolerance and domination. Nigerians would have taken to the streets in jubilation had the President promised that henceforth Government would not act in any way that could even be misconstrued as favouring a particular religion or ethnic group, which has an avowed goal of subjugating the others.

Alas, that was not his promise. The people strongly believed, on basis of experience, “that the problem is not so much one of inadequate security strength as it is reluctance of authorities to use the forces for the protection of the targeted citizens.” They cynically feared that the proposed National Guard would only “turn out to become a militia to further the oppression of Nigerians whose crime is that they do not belong to the officially favoured group.”¹⁰

The problem of security at every front increased in severity as the country moved into the AZ period. In Chapter 1, I refer to a case of an invaded court and a beaten judge. *The Guardian*, on the day I write this paragraph, told about Abubakar Habiu Hashidu, a former governor of Gombe State and once again a gubernatorial candidate. The man was standing trial “for political violence” before Chief Magistrate Joseph Shinga. This was a case of a powerful Muslim politician who felt publicly humiliated for being sentenced and kept in custody by a Christian magistrate, a mere *kaffir*.. Here’s the story according to *The Guardian*:

Alhaji Hashidu was reportedly arrested on Sunday, March 18, along with 14 others after violence broke out during a campaign rally that led to the destruction of public property. Hashidu was then arraigned at the Magistrate Court and charged with inciting violence.

¹⁰I. Ilo, *TC*,4/92.

The Magistrate had decided to adjourn the case and have Hashidu remanded in custody till Wednesday, March 21. This decision infuriated the politician's supporters. In a brute reaction, the supporters and some thugs numbering about 20 went berserk. They stormed the courtroom armed with cutlasses, machetes and guns and overwhelmed the staff, beating and inflicting injuries on the Magistrate and security operatives before whisking away Hashidu to an unknown destination. At the end of the attack, the Magistrate was left with deep cuts on his forehead and was rushed to the hospital.

The State Police Commissioner, Barrister Joseph Ahmed Ibi, confirmed the incident and said that the command was awaiting a court order on whether to re-arrest Hashidu for escaping from lawful custody or for contempt of court. But who allowed the thugs into the court premises? The police should have apprehended the hoodlums.

The writer commented that such judicial violence is part of a “rising wave of attacks” in different parts of the country. If care is not taken, this can only result in anarchy. “The courts are hallowed chambers and should be duly respected. Any attempt by any individual or group to sidetrack judicial due process and resort to lawlessness against a judge desecrates the court and its sovereignty.”¹¹ Well, that’s the almost impossible atmosphere in which people have to find their way.

¹¹*The Guardian*, 27 Mar/2007.