

Insecurity

Meeting Upon Meeting But The Carnage Continues - *The Guardian*

Shortly after arriving from Europe, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu met the heads of Nigeria's security agencies concerning the worsening state of insecurity under his watch. This is just one of the meetings he holds with the group whenever a surge in carnage spreads across the land. In the few weeks that he was away – and even up till now – Plateau, Benue and Borno states were especially terrorized into near submission by terrorists. Hundreds of innocent citizens have been killed and property worth billions of naira destroyed by arsonist herdsmen. Governors of Benue and Plateau states, Hyacinth Alia and Caleb Mutfwang, respectively, said their states are under siege and the forests, including grazing reserves, are under occupation by terrorists. Indeed, Mutfwang said almost all the 17 local councils in his state are plagued by insecurity. Borno State Governor, Prof. Babagana Zulum, at a recent 'expanded' state security meeting, lamented that Nigeria was losing the fight to terrorists who are intensifying attacks not only on the defenceless civilian population, but also brazenly on military targets. Many Nigerians do not have to be overly security conscious before being aware of this ugly security situation in the land. Many have been affected, directly or indirectly, by the various incidents; and many others follow daily reports of killings and destruction in the media.

It is most unfortunate that the security agencies of the government responsible for peace and order in the country are usually the last to react, even lamely, to the series of carnage. This time around, they have to be summoned by the president to an emergency security meeting. Was that to remind them of their onerous responsibility? This is the tragic situation of a country not officially at war. In response, Mr. Tinubu summoned his security chiefs to, in the words of National Security Adviser (NSA), Nuhu Ribadu, give 'us new directives... insisting that we work harder to restore security in the country' obviously, the Commander-in-Chief does not think his security officers are meeting his high expectations. It is in order that Tinubu, as the 'Head of State, the Chief Executive of

the Federation, and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federation' should issue 'new directives' on security matters because of the information available to him from myriad sources. That is part of his remit within the overarching 'primary' duty imposed upon his government in Section 14(2)(b) of the 1999 Constitution. In addition, President Tinubu is also under oath to act 'always in the interest of the sovereignty, integrity, solidarity, well-being, and prosperity of the Federal Republic of Nigeria...'

In March, the President reportedly met the service chiefs ostensibly over the worsening security situation in the country, including the alleged attack on oil installations. Meetings after meetings, there does not at all seem to be an improvement since the immediate preceding administration of Muhammadu Buhari in the strategy of government to respond to the brazenness of terrorists. The provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Act are good on paper, but they are not enforced to make a noticeable difference in the state of security across the country. As Zulum said, even grounds gained are being lost to the criminals; besides that, they are sufficiently confident to take the battle to military formations.

He said: "It is unfortunate that the renewed Boko Haram attacks and kidnappings in many communities, almost on a daily basis, without confrontation, signal that Borno State is losing ground". In truth, it is not only Borno that is losing ground; Nigeria is losing ground! Meetings will not speak the language that terrorists can understand and submit to. No. Constituted federal, state, and local government authorities cannot, must not, fall asleep over their constitutional obligation to this country and its people. They must be reminded that Section 14(2)(b) unequivocally tells them that "the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government...". This is not a suggestion but a commandment of the constitution; it must be carried out to the letter. Alas, the way and manner in which they go about the demands of their respective positions,

heads of the three tiers of government, are yet to absorb the full import of this provision. Put differently, the only constitutional *raison d'être* of any government is as stated in the Section 14(2)(b). Outside that, no government deserves to be so-called. It is not for nothing that the relevant section puts 'security' before welfare; it is common sense that no productive, leisure, or any other positive activity for development and growth can occur in a polity unless it is safe and secure. Nor can the 'welfare' of the people be assured in a state of insecurity.

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