

NIGERIA'S KILLING FIELD

53,148 Killed by Terrorists under Buhari, North East records highest toll

No fewer than 53,418 Nigerians lost their lives to non-state actors between May 29, 2015 and October 15, 2022. The deaths occurred mostly from farmers/herders' conflict, clashes by religious groups, and attacks by terrorists and bandits. The data of Nigerians killed since the inception of the regime of the President, Major General Muhammadu Buhari (retd.), were obtained from the Nigerian Security Tracker, a project of the Council on Foreign Relations of the United States of America. Insecurity has worsened under the regime with some state governors instructing their citizens to bear arms to defend themselves despite the current embargo on the issuance of firearm licences. Governors Samuel Ortom of Benue State, Bello Matawalle of Zamfara State and Aminu Massari of Katsina State have made several calls in that regard. It was also on the same matter of insecurity that frustrated federal lawmakers threatened to impeach the President.

A breakdown of the killings by geo-political zones showed that the South-West region recorded no fewer than 2,170 deaths in the period under review with Ekiti having 109; Ondo, 340; Osun, 198; Ogun, 507; Oyo, 310; and Lagos, 706. A total of 3,688 deaths were recorded in the South-South region with Akwa Ibom State having 373; Bayelsa, 350; Cross River, 685; Delta, 720; Edo, 463; and Rivers, 1,097. In the South-East region, Abia recorded 249 killings; Anambra, 613; Ebonyi, 562; Enugu, 273; and Imo, 574, thus making a total of 2,271. The North-Central region, including the Federal Capital Territory, recorded a total of 8,593 deaths with Benue topping with 2,771; Niger, 2,572; Plateau, 1,709; Kogi, 654; Nasarawa, 320; FCT, 317; and Kwara, 250. The North-East region, which is the epicenter of Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgency, recorded the highest number of deaths in the period under review with a total of 23,106. Borno State recorded 18,213 deaths; Adamawa 1,853; Yobe, 1,375; Taraba, 1,335; Bauchi, 169; and Gombe 161. According to the report, a total of 13,590 persons have so far been killed under Buhari in the North- West region, where 2,037 lives have

been wasted in the President's home state of Katsina. However, Zamfara leads with 5,6164 deaths; Sokoto, 872; Kaduna, 530; Kebbi, 331; Kano, 149; and Jigawa, 55. A former Minister of Defence, Lt.-Gen. Theophilus Danjuma (retd.), recently reiterated his call on Nigerians, especially residents of Taraba State, to acquire arms and defend themselves and their territories against bandits.

Danjuma made the call during the coronation and presentation of staff of office to the 25th Aku Uka of Wukari, Adda Ishaku Ali, in the Wukari Local Government Area of the state. He lamented that innocent Nigerians were being attacked and killed by bandits, who were being allegedly guided by troops to perpetrate the act. Danjuma said, "When I said the military were colluding with the armed bandits in 2017, the then minister of defence set up a



kangaroo commission of enquiry that mischievously submitted that there was no evidence about my claim and they asked me to come and defend it. "I thank God today that the evidence is very clear to all Nigerians now. "Many Nigerian communities are now being sacked by the same bandits that I alleged and all these bandits are foreigners. "As a soldier, I must say that the best way to defend is to attack. I will not buy arms for you. But I urge you to find out how those attacking you acquired arms, and then acquire the arms and attack back to defend yourselves and your territory." He added, "I congratulate you, the new supreme ruler of the great Kwararafa Kingdom, the Aku

Uka of Wukari.

"I must advice you to embrace peace and ensure its existence, but I must also tell you to defend your territory and the people. "You are surrounded by the armed bandits, who are out to kill and destabilise the peace of your territory and you must exploit serious efforts to defend your people and the territory." Taraba State Governor, Darius Ishaku, and his Plateau State counterpart, Simon Lalong, called on the Aku Uka, Ishaku Manu Ada Ali, to follow the historical footsteps of his predecessors to rule the kingdom with justice.

The Sultan of Sokoto, Sa'ad Abubakar, appealed to traditional rulers within the Aku's jurisdiction to give him the needed support to succeed and asked the youth and politicians to carry out their political campaigns in peace.

Commenting on this, a security analyst, Timothy Avele, attributed the rising insecurity across the country to the lack of prosecution of arrested suspects, ease of getting firearms and the rising unemployment rate in the country. He also explained that criminal activities were spreading as a result of the relocation of criminals to different parts of the country. Avele said, "The factors are many. However, some of the terrorists being dislodged from the North-East by the military are moving down to other places in the country and engaging in crimes. Secondly, because violent crimes pay more in Nigeria with no arrest and conclusive persecution, the majority now see it as their share of the national cake. "Thirdly, getting sophisticated weapons in Nigeria is as simple as buying garri in the market as long as you have cash, because we do not have strategic intelligence planning and management. Of course, if you add the reducing purchasing power of the citizens and unemployment, then you have the drivers of insecurity in Nigeria." Avele added that the current regime had spent the most amounts on security in history, stressing that there had been lack of proper monitoring of how the funds were being expended. He said, "Truth be told, I think this administration has made the biggest budget in the security and defence sector. However, I score the administration 35 per cent in proper implementation and monitoring of the huge funds budgeted and released for security and defence. "The funds are spent, but the results on the ground indicate a poor usage by those concerned, and sadly, no questions are being asked by those who are supposed to ask questions." A development economist, Aliyu Ilias, said the increase in allocation to the security sector was in line with the rising insecurity in the country. "Security keeps increasing and there is the need to buy more equipment; so, it is understandable that there is an increase in budgetary allocations," he stated. He said there was corruption in the system and stressed the need for transparency in the use of allocated funds. Ilias added, "There is a collapse as a result of corruption in the long run. Because if there is no corruption, the money will be properly used and we will see the rippling effects on the environment. "The budget itself is not well structured in terms of the expenditure. Also, there is hardly any probe of some expenditure carried out by the Armed Forces. There should be a detailed report on how money is being spent." He also questioned the amount for security vote being controlled by state

governors, which he noted had not been effectively utilised in combating insecurity in the various states. A professor of Economics at the Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Sheriffdeen Tella, agreed that the rising level of insecurity had led to increase in budgetary allocations. He said, "The level of insecurity has been rising. Definitely, there is the quest for more equipment. This is responsible for the increase in the budget. It simply means the level of insecurity is rising, which should not be." He said there was a need for some level of transparency in how the allocated funds were being utilised in order to eliminate corruption in the system. "Also, we have to look at whether those things that were requested were actually supplied. We have found out in the recent past that the military does not buy what they are supposed to buy; they only send people to the war zone without the required ammunition. So, corruption is a part of it," Tella added. Some People's Democratic Party senators have explained why the impeachment move against the President has been stalled by the National Assembly. The lawmakers, who spoke exclusively to *Sunday PUNCH*, explained that they had to shelve the plan to remove Buhari because of his quick response and deliberate actions to curb the increasing level of insecurity across the country.

One of the lawmakers, Senator Gershom Bassey, representing the Cross River South Senatorial District, emphasised that their action was not for the President to be impeached, but to ensure safety and security in Nigeria. "As I mentioned earlier, the issue wasn't about impeachment, it was more of us standing up to the occasion on insecurity. The entire outburst was to ensure that the country was safe for the citizens. That was why we told Mr President to provide security or quit," Bassey stated. In the same vein, the lawmaker representing Edo South Senatorial District, Senator Matthew Uroghide, said, "When you put up a demand and the demand is met, even if it's not 100 per cent, will you continue the agitation? No. That walkout staged by senators elected on the platform of the PDP wasn't a show; we had discussions on the floor and even at the executive session before we came to the plenary. "Everybody was already tired. We had debated about security on the floor of the Senate for the umpteenth time. So, we said if the President did not have a clue, let him go. Let's bring in somebody who will have a clue if a former General in the Nigerian Army has no clue about what is happening. "But immediately after, you saw that the President took action. The President himself must have seen that the issue was beyond the Senate President himself."

He added that the issue was purely about security and transcended every other sentiment, which was why most of the lawmakers were in support of the impeachment threat, including members of the ruling All Progressives Congress. Some members of the National Assembly across party lines had before embarking on their two-month annual vacation had on July 27, 2022, vowed to commence an impeachment process against the President over his failure to curb the worsening insecurity in the country.