

# Nigerian government, Kadaria Ahmed, Trust TV and the BBC

*By Emmanuel Ogbeche*

The Nigerian government is miffed; Ms. Kadaria Ahmed is no less angry. In keeping with her history of excoriating her industry, it was little of a surprise that Ms. Ahmed will give a passing rebuke to the affliction which the Buhari Presidency represents in terms of national security and cohesion. Ms.



Ahmed's riposte which came before Alhaji Lai Mohammed's fatwa against the BBC and Trust TV, owned by the Trust Group, for giving "celebrity coverage" to terrorists' aka bandits terrorizing Nigerians in the North West, fits into a tradition of media intolerance by the administration. If only Buhari and Ms. Ahmed had demonstrated such fanaticism against terrorists and bandits, Nigerians will not be living in apprehension and uncertainty as there are today.

In her piece, *The BBC in Nigeria: Between reporting and propagating terror*, Ms. Ahmed argued that the "BBC's reputation for stellar public service journalism is being damaged," for giving voice and putting faces to those who have raped, pillaged, murdered and made homeless thousands of Nigerians and collected ransoms in billions.

Kadaria as a former employee of the global media outfit suggested that the BBC will dare not air such a documentary if it was against British interest. Citing a single authority, Communications Professor at the University of Toronto, Mahmoud Eid, out of tons of others, Ms. Ahmed gives the impression that there is singularity of thought on the nexus between terror and media which forbids such broadcast or reporting. Far from it!

It was John David Viera, Associate Professor at the California State University, who made the point that "contemporary terrorists have put the broadcast media in a difficult position on how to cover terrorism without advancing terrorism goals." (VIERA, JOHN DAVID. "TERRORISM AT THE BBC: THE IRA ON BRITISH TELEVISION." *Journal of Film and Video*, vol. 40, no. 4, 1988, pp. 28–36. JSTOR).

While it is granted that the British government censor's certain materials in relation to home grown terrorism, it is on record that the BBC in 1985 aired a documentary, *At the Edge of the Union*, which included an interview with Martin McGuinness, an IRA leader. The documentary was however banned by the BBC's Board of Governors after political pressure from the Margaret Thatcher government leading to a nationwide strike by employees of the BBC and NBC. Besides the BBC, several national and international news outlets air documentaries of terrorists and their heinous activities. It should be said that it is a surprise that Ms. Ahmed failed to highlight the political and moral dilemma journalists face when it comes to airing or reporting on

terrorists and their activities. The suggestion in her vituperation that the reports of the BBC and Trust TV were without weighing the outcomes, as if she is the Holy Grail on broadcasting is poor and sanctimonious.

Records bear evidence that major networks, international

and national, have conducted documentaries and interviews with terror lords and in the process providing valuable intel to security agencies and insights of the terrorist's activities to the people.

It is established that Robert Fisk interviewed Al Qaeda founder, Osama Bin Laden, for *The Independent* on three occasions: 1993, 1996 and 1997.

Also, Scott MacLeod of *Time* interviewed Bin Laden in Khartoum, Sudan at a building on the outskirts of the city in 1996. Similarly, Abdel Bari Atwan is reputed to have "stayed in the caves for two days, sleeping in primitive conditions in sub-zero temperatures" in order to interview Bin Laden in 1996, for the London-based Pan-Arab newspaper *Al Quds Al Arabi*.

There are a host of other journalists and media outlets that went to great lengths just like the BBC and Trust TV have to interview Bin Laden and other criminal outlaws.

To further put lie to Ms. Ahmed's claim, after the tragic event of the 2001 September 11 attacks on the United States by Al Qaeda elements, *The Daily Ummat* interviewed Osama bin Laden on September 28, 2001, and the interview was relayed in English by the BBC monitoring service. It is disrespectful for both the Nigerian government and Ms. Ahmed in particular not to appreciate the hard work, investment and risks that the crews of Trust TV and BBC put into gaining those interviews. What one would have imagined was for the government to approach both organisations and glean off-the-record information in the feeble response to the atrocious attacks that are yet to abate.

It is a shame that a government that has failed to offer any tangible response to the widespread and wanton killings of its people which it is constitutionally obligated to protect is sorely vexed at documentaries that expose murderers, rapists and arsonists.

For Ms. Ahmed, it fits into a pattern of an alleged agent for the government. In the build up to previous elections especially the 2019 presidential elections, Ms. Ahmed's partisanship was open and without shame. In her interview with the candidates of the APC then, Buhari and Yemi Osinbajo, SAN, she was soft and lacked the killer instinct of an unbiased anchor.

But during the sessions for Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi, presidential and vice presidential candidates of the PDP, she was ferocious and intent. Such is the character of Ms. Ahmed.