



Aid to the  
Church in Need

ACN INTERNATIONAL

## **DARK CLOUD OF VIOLENCE OVER OUR LAND**

*A STATEMENT FROM THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF KADUNA ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCE ON THE  
INCESSANT KILLINGS IN THE PROVINCE*

The dark clouds of violence have enveloped our land. Our country is in the firm grip of the grim reaper. In the last few years, the purveyors of this violence have taken over the land and placed our security forces on the defensive. Hitherto, the nation's main challenge was how to contain the dreaded terrorist group, Boko Haram. Two years ago, the military announced that it had degraded Boko Haram and basked in the euphoria that Boko Haram was no longer holding Nigerian territory. But our joy was short lived as the story has progressively gotten far worse.

Today, almost the entire Northern states are in the grip of these purveyors of violence and death. In the last three years, we have witnessed the relentless attacks and ransacking of entire communities by bandits in states like Benue, Kebbi, Plateau, Kaduna, Katsina, Nasarawa, Niger, Sokoto, Zamfara. Thousands of lives have been lost to these bandits who have operated with relentless abandon. Taken together with the devastation of Boko Haram, Nigeria today ranks as not only the poverty capital of the world, but the most violent and unsafe place to be. With Covid-19, our situation has become even more precarious and perilous.

Since this tragedy came upon us, our Governors in the north have done their best, but as we know, this is still not good enough. All our communities still bear huge injuries and scars. We call on our Governors to remain relentless in seeking to end this tragedy with greater urgency, dedication and sincerity. There have been attempts at negotiations with these criminals by some Governors and in some cases, huge sums of money have been paid. Yet, sadly, the victims of these criminals remain trapped in camps as refugees, living and dying in poverty and disease. This is unacceptable. We appeal to the Governors to place the welfare of the victims of violence before these murderous criminals. Unless they are defeated in an all-out war, all appeasement by way of endless payments of our money will only feed their armoury and strengthen their evil enterprise.

To many Nigerians, the federal government has looked on in either helplessness or total lack of concern and care. All of this has taken its toll on the morale and confidence of the security agencies. We are hearing of young men abandoning the battle fields, some hundreds of soldiers are opting for early retirement from the service on grounds of loss of motivation. Nigeria has never been as rudderless as it is now. Amidst all of this, we need to turn our attention specifically to Southern Kaduna.

We, the Bishops of Kaduna Ecclesiastical Province; made up of Kaduna, Kano, Kontagora Minna, Sokoto and Zaria decided to schedule our meeting here in Kafanchan so that we can pray with you and extend our heartfelt condolences and stand firmly in solidarity with you. Like other Nigerians across the country, we have watched with deep sorrow and pain, the mindless slaughtering of hundreds of our innocent citizens in your different communities across our province and beyond. We have channeled our pain into prayers, believing that the merciful God will look up on us.

Some of you may recall that we were here in Kafanchan in 2018 to express similar sentiments of prayer and sympathy with you. During that occasion, we celebrated the Holy Mass with a large gathering at the





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Catholic Church, Gidan Waya. We then used the opportunity to visit and pray with some of your communities in the Kafanchan area. Similarly, last year, we were at Kajuru where we also celebrated the holy Mass at the Catholic Church, Kufana in Kajuru Local Government Area. In the course of that encounter, we also visited, prayed and condoled with the Ardo and the local Traditional ruler of Kajuru on December 9, 2019.

Today, we are here on a similar visit of prayer and solidarity. The stories of these tragedies are already well known to us all. What is left for us the living is to see how we can rebuild our lives again because it is the greatest honour we can pay to those who have died. No amount of revenge, bitterness, calumny, hatred or name calling can bring back those who have lost their lives in these senseless and unnecessary blood lettings. We are pained by the shame that these evil deeds have brought to our country and our people. We are pained by the image that we have presented to the rest of the world. We are pained by the trauma that has been inflicted on our collective psyche. We are pained by the culture of death that has made life so cheap for the most vulnerable in our society. We are pained by the fact that we are losing our common humanity.

Over the years, our people have been woken up to these orgies of mindless slaughter by people who have totally lost the right to be called human beings not to talk of people who can claim to believe in God. This is not who we are as Africans. This is not who we are as Nigerians. This is not who we are as people from Southern Kaduna. Over time, we have intermarried, loved, worked and celebrated our joys and shared our sorrows together across faith and tribe. We, your shepherds are calling on you to please pause, sheath your swords and to please end the senseless killings, not tomorrow but now. We call on you, men and women of various faiths to please know that God is not pleased with us. We call on you to know that the rest of the country is equally saddened by these happenings. Every day, the question is, when will it all end? The answer is not blowing in the wind. It is in us.

In response, we now call on you to please rally around one another. Our concern is not who is right or who is wrong. We are concerned with what is right and what is wrong. The killings are wrong. The killers are totally wrong. What is right is, protecting one another and standing together. There is no justification at all for all the innocent lives that have been lost. None of these unfortunate citizens died fighting anyone. None died for any cause that they know anything about. Muslim, Christian, or Traditionalist, none died for a crime they knew anything about. They have all died simply because they happen to be living in Southern Kaduna. No, we must turn back before it is too late.

Consequently, we make the following appeals:

**1: To the President of the federal Republic of Nigeria:**

As the country continues to hemorrhage uncontrollably, it is difficult to know what else to say that has not been said. We are shocked by the seeming lack of empathy that continues to be displayed by the President regarding the senseless loss of lives across the country. The slap in the wrist attitude with the Service Chiefs despite the abysmal performance seems to suggest that the President is unable to place national security before whatever other narrow interests that are known only to him. We are not so much worried about the retirement of Service Chiefs or lack of it as the total absence of a clear roadmap for arresting the drift and the climate of anomie that engulfs the country now. We are shocked by the fact that our President displays such overreaching enthusiasm in sending out condolence messages to victims of accidents abroad but pays very little or no attention to the victims of dastardly murders under





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his nose, deaths of his own citizens over who voted for him and whose lives and properties he swore to protect. Something urgent needs to be done to pull our country back from the brink.

## **2: To the Governor of Kaduna State:**

We are saddened by the fact that in these last years, Kaduna State has been consumed by this violence and our hearts go out to our brothers and sisters in such areas especially as Birnin Gwari, Kajuru and here in Southern Kaduna. Crises test the will of a leader. At times like these, emotions are not enough. At times like this, a leader must seek out support by adopting the twin track of diplomacy, using backroom channels and keeping an eye on restoring peace. Like the mother of twins, a leader at times like these must not be seen to be sleeping on one side!

As with the Federal government, we believe that the State government could do more in terms of showing empathy to the victims of these crises. The people of Southern Kaduna feel abandoned by their Governor in their grief. We appreciate that these times test the will of any leader, but there is no substitute for sobriety, calm and focus. We therefore call on the Governor to consult with across the spectrum, have the patience of listening even to those who do not agree with him and focus on persuasion and consensus building across the divide. We encourage him to visit the scenes of these tragedies and use the opportunity of condolences to scold as well as appeal to the hearts of his people. These gestures are a mark of good politics. Bad politics divides, good politics unites.

## **3: To the Political class at all levels:**

It is important that politicians come to terms with the fact that no matter what the cause of this crisis is, ultimately, the business of politics is to resolve conflicts. We believe that politicians across the divide in Southern Kaduna can do more than they have done so far. Members of the ruling Party from Southern Kaduna must do more to give their Party a good name while we call on Opposition politicians not to exploit the pain of our people. The endless killings can only turn our people against politics. Therefore, we call on the political class to rise beyond the boundaries of ethnicity, party and religious affiliations and see their people as one. It is criminal to play politics with the lives of our people.

## **4: To the Traditional and Religious Rulers**

In the course of our visit, we have paid courtesy calls on some of our traditional rulers to both commiserate with them and also encourage them to play their part in helping to end these crises. We are aware of the efforts that you have made and continue to make despite the constraints. We enjoy you to remain relentless in making your sacrifices for those under your care. Learn to embrace all irrespective of class or status. God who sees our hearts will bless your efforts and bring healing to your communities. You more than anyone else feel the hurt and are daily witnessing the brokenness within your own communities. May God provide you with the wisdom to guide your people. Please, we call on you, stand together. You are above politics and above ethnicity. Let solidarity remain your watchword.

## **5: To the Women:**

To our women who watch the homestead and are custodians of the hopes of our families. You are always the first in the line of sufferings that these afflictions bring. Often, you helplessly watch your own husbands and children being brutally and grisly murdered. Some of your fellow women have lost their lives too. These tragedies have left many of you widows and left bitter memories. You have been left with children to look after. Do not be afraid of the future. We assure you that we are close to you and





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appeal to you to remain faithful and committed to the future of forgiveness. Without you, there is no future for our communities and society at large.

### **6: To the Youth:**

Our dear Young People of Southern Kaduna, the future is in your hands and to a great extent, it is yours to build. You have the talent, time and opportunity to change our society. The nation we have today is a caricature of what you had hoped for and dreamt of. However, you have the enthusiasm and energy of your youth. Make sure you use it well. We appeal to you to look beyond local differences of religion, ethnicity or even your local communities. The future holds more for you than this. The world of the future is a world in which you will be citizens of a global community without boundaries. There are no short cuts to greatness. You must seek Education as it is the only viable tool for progress.

Be prepared to learn because your future depends on the lessons you learn today. As Africans, our elders hold a central place, our communities have cherished values which you must imbibe. Learn to respect them. We appeal to you to shun violence and, united as young people from Southern Kaduna across religion and community, embrace your differences and start building a future of your dreams. The place to start is here. The time to start is now. Violence has no utility value. It is in your interest that these killings end. Reject any form of violence and enlist in the peace brigade today.

### **7: To the Media**

We want to thank our Journalists who continue to ply their trade in these difficult times. Many of you put your lives on the line to report these tragedies to the world. We highly commend you. However, we also wish to appeal to you to be more restrained in your reporting these tragedies. Use the social media well. Very often, some reports add more pain and inflame emotions. We call on you to respect the dead and the privacy of families. Try to present both sides of what are clearly very complicated stories of our people. Very often, what you say and what you don't say can change a situation. We continue to pray for God to protect you and to guide you as you pursue your difficult tasks.

Finally, and like we had cause to say a couple of years ago, "The ravages of Boko Haram, the herdsmen, kidnappers and the bandits have turned everyone into a victim. We cannot survive this trauma if we do not seek greater collaboration and healing. We can only heal by accepting our own mistakes rather than blaming and finding faults. We can and must rebuild our lives together because with God, all things are possible."

We entrust our Province to the maternal care and protection of our Blessed Mother the Virgin Mary, Queen of Nigeria.

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Most Rev. Matthew M. NDAGOSO  
Most Rev. John N. Niyirin, OSA  
Archbishop of Kaduna and Metropolitan  
Bishop of Kano and Secretary  
Kaduna Ecclesiastical Province

