

Boko Haram Insurgency and Violence against Women in Northern Nigeria

Hadiza Bilyaminu Yakubu

Department of Political Science Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Katsina Nigeria

Email; hadizay@rocketmail.com

Tel: +2348033359713

ABSTRACT

Boko Haram has claimed responsibility for numerous attacks in northern Nigeria. The primary area of operation. Women are the most adversely affected people in Boko Haram attacks.. Violence against women is generally regarded as belonging in the private sphere and is shielded from outside scrutiny. A culture of silence reinforces the stigma that attaches to the victim rather than the perpetrators of such crimes. This paper therefore, intends to examine the security challenges in northern Nigeria as a result of Boko Haram insurgence. The paper also highlights the consequences of the violence against women in the region, and also tried to educate the women on how to be courageous enough to report the perpetrators of sexual harassments. The analysis of this write up is mainly based on the secondary source of data. There are recommendations and conclusions in the last part of the paper.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Women, Violence, Insurgency and sexual harassments

INTRODUCTION

In the bloody fall out of this increasing Boko Haram attacks in Northern Nigeria women are the most adversely affected. Security as an essential concept is commonly associated with the alleviation of threats to cherish values, especially the survival of individuals, groups, or objects in the near future. [1]. The Boko Haram phenomenon in northern Nigeria, is seen as a social violence which arises from the internal contradictions of neo-liberal capitalist development in the region. In class a society, this kind of violence may seem to be an ideological and political tendency of the oppressed social group, who could not be heard [2].

It has to be noted that women oppression is rooted in class society which has worsen with the advent of capitalism. Patriarchy exploits the labour of the women; capitalism exploits the labour of the wage earners, either male or female [3]. She pointed out that in Nigeria and elsewhere, religion and tradition are instruments of women oppression. They constitute among others the ideology of the society, which is a superstructure on

the socio-economic foundation of any class society. Many of the religious doctrine and traditions are designed to defend and maintain private property. They are retained until now because of the fact that feudalism might have come to an end, the private property still remains except it has only changed character [4]. Patriarchy is a by-product of class society. It came into being along with the private property, as it is the case of state. This is in order to preserve the interest of the early beneficiaries of the then socio-economic arrangement.

Violence against women is generally regarded as belonging in the private sphere and is shielded from outside scrutiny. A culture of silence reinforces the stigma that attaches to the victim rather than the perpetrators of such crimes. This has become obvious going by the story of Folake a victim who was made the criminal jailed after she accused a man of rape. She was a domestic worker forced by her employer's husband into his bedroom and made her watch a violent video tape before forcing her to

www.idosr.org

have sex. A medical examination supported her allegation. Yet it was Folake that was charged with slander for making false accusation, she was consequently remanded in prison, until her family could raise the bail money, to have her released. The material evidence of the crime, handed over to the police in the nature of Nigeria's Criminal Justice. No charges were therefore, brought against the male accused [4]. Dismissive attitudes within the police and an inaccessible justice system compound the failures of the state to protect women's rights.

Background of Northern Nigeria and Boko Haram

The area known as northern Nigeria serves as the 'melting pot' of the modern Nigerian federation. Northern Nigeria, therefore, serves as the nexus of considerable social, economic, political and cultural struggles. The strategic importance of northern Nigeria in commerce, trade, religious activities and thoughts has spanned a long period of time. These activities enhanced great contacts with ancient empires and kingdoms in Africa, the Mediterranean and Islamic world.

As a geographical region of Nigeria, northern Nigeria is much more vast and arid and of course less densely populated than the south. The people of northern Nigeria are largely Muslims and many of them are Hausa or transformed into Hausa speakers. Parts from Muslims, there are other religious or cultural groups. Northern Nigeria became a British colony in 1900 under the northern protectorate. Both the northern and southern protectorates were amalgamated in 1914 to form the Nigerian federation. The modern northern Nigeria is currently composed of 19 states, with Abuja; the Federal Capital Territory.

Agriculture is the mainstay of the northern Nigerian economy, even though there are other mineral resources. The

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of security, is meaningless without a critical discourse of something pertinent to secure. Indeed, Security could best be understood when situated

Hadiza

sustainability of Agriculture in northern Nigerian economy requires a strategic balance in the ecological and socio-economic activities as well as political considerations. In northern Nigeria, rainfall occurs seasonally with a pronounced dry season. The seasonal rainfall and prolonged dry season bring about dynamics in the ecosystem and sour relationships resulting in a sharp division between sedentary farmers and the nomadic pastoralists [5].

Northern Nigeria is a plural society composed of large ethnic groups with immigration of several new ones. Much of the north was once politically united in the northern region, a federal division disbanded in 1967.

The Origin of Boko Haram

The Boko Haram as it is popularly known, though the Islamist group refers to itself as Jama'atul Ahlis Sunnah Lidda'awati Waljihad (literally translated as "movement for call and striving in the way of God") or simply Yusufiyya coined after its founder and leader, Muhammad Yusuf. On the other hand, it has been labeled as an Islamist terrorist group comprising of uneducated, impoverished and anti-status quo elements whose stock-in-trade is to detonate bombs in public buildings and shoot security personnel and others. Also, the Boko Haram sects are seen as revolutionaries opposed to the injustice in Nigeria and whose objective is to replace the existing decay with an Islamic order [6].

The sect is thought by some its roots in the Sahaba group which Muhammad Yusuf came to lead in the late 1990's before re-orienting the group as Boko Haram. Yusuf was a favourite student of prominent Nigerian Islamic Scholar Sheikh Jafar Mahmud Adam. It has been reported that the two fell out over Yusuf's extremist positions with Boko Haram, this made some of the Yusufiyya sect, moving from Kano State to Yusuf's hometown of Maiduguri, in Borno State, in 2004 [7].

within the context of a referent object. In the long sweep of human history, the central focus of security has been people. Nigeria has long been falling severe

www.idosr.org

security challenges prior to 2007. Thus, the internal security challenge in Nigeria since the enthronement of democracy in 1999 has received mixed reactions within and outside the Nigeria's political environment. The security situation between 2007- to date in Nigeria obviously took different dimensions. These periods however, witnessed a consistent pressure on the government. Incessant bombings in the northern parts of Nigeria by Boko Haram groups, mayhem by the insurgents and other elements, Jos crises among others [8]. According to Sunday Tribune, (November 15, 2008), the assailants have continued to unleash terror and cause tension in Jos. They have succeeded in displacing Nigerians by setting their houses and properties ablaze (Sunday Tribune, November 15, 2008). These seriously have impacted negatively on women, many of whom lost their husbands and are displaced at the internally displaced camps with their children left homeless. In northern Nigeria the security challenges fuels the violence against women. During any conflict situation, women are the worst affected due to the total breakdown of law and order in the country. And in Nigeria [9] noted that the coercive method as the name suggests has to do with the deployment of troops to the areas of conflict with the objective of controlling the crises. In Nigeria, this method of managing the ethno-religious conflicts has taken many forms depending on the magnitudes of the crises in question. He further stated that in a light of ethno-religious crises for instance, the conventional policemen are the first to be drafted to the crisis point and to be assisted by the mobile policemen in case the conventional troops cannot cope. But in a very serious ethno-religious conflicts. Government is forced in this case to make use of special Joint Task Forces (JTF) which is made up of the army, the Navy, Air force, etc. because of the military nature of this kind of intervention. However, such operations are usually associated with many vices, including rape, torture and in some cases shooting of innocent citizens [10].

Hadiza

Women are specifically targeted and made victims of torture, mass rape, forced prostitution, and forced termination of pregnancy and mutilation [11].

There are reported cases of women being abducted and given as 'wives' to insurgents or forced to serve as sex slaves. Pathetically, it was reported in Kano last year that the Joint Task Force (JTF) meant to protect citizens were indicted for violating of right and privacy in Fagge and Doroyi area, where they were said to have entered houses and attempted to rape some women there.

Women are regularly exposed to various forms of physical, psychological, sexual and emotional violence. This can be traced to the unequal power relations in society between women and the pervading patriarchal norms that support the inequality. In Nigeria, for example in northern part of the country they are still experiencing violent upheaval and poor educational achievement levels prior to the security challenges with many girls dropping out from school. In this part of the country parents prioritize the education of boys over girls when resources are available and this also is violating the rights of the female child. Some months back wives of the policemen and soldiers protested in the federal capital territory pleading with the insurgent groups to stop killing their husbands [12].

Indeed to say that women and children are the most targeted in cases of violent conflict is stating the obvious. Countless reports across the globe show that in cases of civil conflicts and upheavals this group is deliberately targeted and suffer the most hurt. The security challenges caused by the insurgency brought serious multi-dimensional consequences on the women in northern Nigeria. These consequences were violence against women in different forms. And this really have terrible effects on them for the rest of their lives.

In northern Nigeria the penal code governs the region and a major concern about the penal code in relation to rape is a role of a witness in a rape case. Majority of rape cases do not take place where

there would be witnesses which is in very rare occasion, they are unwilling to testify in the court of law. And this is making the perpetrators of this act to continue with their inhumanity and at the same time violating women rights everywhere.

Women should be encouraged to report any form of violence and seek professional support from any of violence they encountered [13]. The court must seize every opportunity it has to show that justice frowns at violence against women in any form or by any member of society, without exclusion of social strata. Lawmakers in Nigeria must continually be pro-active in protecting women, in a bid to eliminate violence against women and lobbyist must not rest on their oars. Health practitioners must be willing to report to concerned authorities suspected cases of violence and be willing to testify in courts. Also trained counselors and nongovernmental organizations should rise to this challenge as well as those who play a direct role in salvaging the situation and also enforcing the law.

It is the duty of government to stop violence against women and to exercise much diligence to prevent the abuses; investigate and in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women more importantly whether such acts are perpetrated by the state, person or armed groups. Women should be provided access to effective

remedies, and including medical assistance to the victims [14].

Also, films and jingle should be used for enlightenment as a tool of protecting women from violence as the media is a very viable tool in social reconstruction.

It is obvious that women in northern Nigeria are seriously affected by the insurgency in the region. The inability of the government to address the root causes of dissatisfaction, anger and agitation among various groups in the country resulted to serious security breaches confronting the region and Nigeria as a whole.

The ugly situation has not only denied women the right to their freedom, but also led to serious problems such as women trafficking, high rate of poverty in the region among others. All these problems are traceable to internal security challenges in northern Nigeria occasioned by the activities of the insurgents and other ethno religious violence among others.

The effects of these challenges particularly the violence against women in northern Nigeria and to save the women and their children from becoming orphans or widows and also victims of rape and other violence, the need for good governance, justice, equity as well as critical evaluation of the performance of security agencies in handling the situation in the region are also needed.

REFERENCES

1. Abdu H. (2002) "Ethno- religious crisis in Kaduna: Impact on women and children, Alamika E. E.O and festus okoye (eds) in "Ethno-religious Conflicts and democracy in Nigeria: challenges. Human Rights Monitor (HRM) 1A Junction Road Kaduna Nigeria.
2. ABBASS, M, Isah. (2012) " No Retreat No Surrender: Conflict for survival between Fulani pastoralists and Farmers in Northern Nigeria; Muhammad H. (eds) in *Nigeria's convulsive federalism; Perspectives on flash-points of conflict in Northern Nigeria* .Cypress concepts and solutions ltd, secretariat, P. O. Box 7213, Ibadan. Nigeria.
3. Amnesty international, (2008) "Nigeria's unheard Voices: widespread violence against women in the family:<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/439463b24.html>.Access ed 27/3/2013
4. Bamidele I. (2012) "Eliminating violence against women in Nigeria: yes, WE CAN <http://www.Brombutton foundation. Org/news> accessed 8/3/2013.
5. Dearn, M. (2011) "Boko Haram: Nigeria's Terrorist Insurgency Evolves; [98](http://www.thinkafrica-</div><div data-bbox=)

- press.com/nigeria/book-Haram.
accessed 7th /May/2013.
6. Manjoo, R, Ms, (2009) "special rapporteur on violence against women; OHCHR-UNOG, 8-14A Venue de la paix 1211 Geneva10 switzerland: [http://www. Vaw@ohchr. Org](http://www.Vaw@ohchr.Org). Accessed: 8/3/2013
 7. Macheal, G. (2001) "The impact of war on children," Hurts and company for UNICEF and UNIFEM, London.
 8. McGrath, J. J. (2012) "Bokom Haram islamist insurgent kill atleast 178 in Nigeria's Kano; <http://www.iblentimes.com/book-Haram-islamist - insurgents-kill-least -178-Nigeria>. Accessed 15/4/2013.
 9. Salawu, B. (2010) " Ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria: Causal Analysis and Proposals for New management strategies" *Department of sociology, Ilorin Nigeria. European Journal of Social sciences volume 13 No. 3.*
 10. Salaam, T. (2003) "A brief Analysis on the situation of women in Nigeria today. Newspaper of the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM): <http://www.socialist Nigeria. Org/women /1-3-03.html>Accessed 15/05/2013.
 11. Nwagboso, I, CHRIS. (2012) "Security challenges and economy of the Nigerian State (2007-2011). *Department of political science, University of Calabar, Nigeria. American International Journal of contemporary research. Vol. No6: june 2012.*
 12. Yusif M. M. (2012) "Social violence called Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria: some thoughts, Department of political sciences. Bayero university Kano, Nigeria.
 13. SALIHI, M.M. (2012) "Governance failure and political violence in Nigeria: The Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lidda'awati wal-Jihad In perspective; Muhammad H. (eds) in Nigeria's convulsive Federalism, perspectives on flash-points of conflict in northern Nigeria.

- Cupress concepts and solutions ltd, Secretariate, P. O. Box 7213, Ibadan Nigeria.
14. *Sunday Tribune Editorial (2008) "Nigeria: Muslims disguised as soldiers, kill 13 more Christians, cut out tongues." Sunday Tribune Newspaper Page. 2 November 15.*