Persistence of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Northern Nigeria: Role of the Church in Curbing the Menace

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Abstract

The social and print media are daily awash with gory pictures and disheartening stories of gruesome killings of humans by fellow humans in the name of ethnic or religious conflicts. Properties and houses worth millions and billions of naira are wasted almost on a daily basis. Many are in IDP camps now for years without access to their home land and there is looming hunger since they are not able to do farming which is their main source of staple food and income. It is such that we seem to loss count of such news. The need to find solution to the current security quagmire is absolutely necessary and is urgent. Failure to act on time will result to more loss of lives and continuous destruction of properties, spelling economic doom for this region and the nation at large since the sensitive nature of the Nigerian society make reprisal attacks possible based on the conflict affecting a people group or religion for another region. Considering this situation, the researcher is committed to finding lasting or durable solution to the persisting violent conflicts.

keywords: Ethnicity, Religion, Conflict

Introduction

All human beings hail from one ethnic group or the other and are naturally religious, this is inbuilt in everyone from creation and at birth. Besides the solidarity for and towards one another due to the cultural heritage we got from our ethnic groups, there is always the strong desire to be connected to the Supreme Being, and a pull towards that which transcends human knowledge and ability. So, everyone is born into a culture and religious experience and within a religious faith and experience. This experience helps not only in knowing the Supreme Being but also: a unifying factor with other humans – knowing that we are from the same descent (Adam and Eve), and the major solution to all the ills rocking the world. Unfortunately, inter/intra religious and inter/intra ethnic conflicts are becoming the order of the day in this nation, thereby, destroying the very fabrics that once bound us together; pushing us many years backward educationally, economically, politically, economically, infrastructurally, in governance and so on. Hence, religion and ethnicity today, seems to be responsible for lack of development and has become the bane of peaceful coexistence across the globe. "We are today full of hatred and suspicion of one another owing to the violent activities of religious fanatics, reprisal attacks, political exigencies resulting from the politisation of religion, etc." (Zaka 2021:87) This has also affected our freedom to practice our religions. Since, God is aware of our differences in religion which He has allowed over the years, the issue of understanding and appreciating our religious and ethnic diversity for peaceful coexistence which makes meaningful development/technological advancement and religious freedom possible cannot be over emphasized.

1.1 What is Ethnicity?

This paper starts by looking at the major concepts in the topic, viz: Ethnicity, Religion, and Conflict. Ethnicity, originate from the Greek *ethnos* which refers to the identification of a group based on a perceived cultural distinctiveness that makes the group into a "people." This distinctiveness is believed to be expressed in language, music, values, art, styles, literature, family life, religion, ritual, food, naming, public life, and material culture.

Ethnicity and Conflict in Northern Nigeria

Ethnicity is people's identity that has over the years showed solidarity, communal efforts and peaceful coexistence. There can be competition among people of same or different ethnic groups and here has been intermarriage across ethnicity. Unfortunately, today, there is increasing tension and constant clash between neighbouring towns leading to loss of lives and property. More so, the animosity caused by this dastard act against fellow humans, has opened communities to external attacks as no one tries to support or protect the other ethnic group. There are many examples space in this paper will not allow us to look at. For example: the Jukun-Tiv Crisis, The Fulani-Berom Crisis, etc. Below are some causes of ethnic conflict:

1. There is poor law enforcement in Nigeria; this poor law enforcement responses, also help entrench violence between indigenes and settlers. In a situation as it has been where official complicity and indifference make prosecutions very rare it will brew trouble. Many have observed that "destructive conduct by the Nigerian security forces itself often becomes a structural cause of violence". This needs serious attention. The Peace Institute has pointed out that
2. Poor education and knowledge of one's belief and culture coupled with poor knowledge of other's belief and couture.
3. Extreme poverty and manipulation of sentiments (Shedrack 2023:14).
4. Inequitable distribution of social amenities.
5. Dominance of one ethnic group or religion in the political affairs/leadership of the nation and not allowing the others to benefit in the wealth of the land.
6. Ethnic Supremacy
7. Land issues for farming and building. This is also called boundary conflict.
8. quest for recognition, and agitation for inclusion in national development or equitable distribution of the "National Cake".

2.1 Religion

Ahuche Peter Zaka in his work on Interfaith Cooperation made profound contributions worthy of note on the issue of religion and its benefit to humanity as captured below. Religion is both an institutional and a personal affair as it relates with a person's interaction with the Supreme Being (Object of Worship) based on

revelation, formulated doctrines, traditions handed over to him/her, heredity, culture, region or background. Today, there are many belief systems that have metamorphosed into various religions with each religious group holding tenaciously to what they believe even to death. As a spiritual exercise, it strikes fear of hurting the object of worship and all believes it has eternal consequences. Religion is an issue of faith, an avenue to access the Supreme Being and expected to be a unifying factor in every society since man is created a religious Being. Unfortunately, the world over, religion has become the cause of unrest, affects peaceful coexistence, and has further divided this once peaceful and united nation; leading to many calling for secession of the country and even the breaking up of this great nation. In Northern Nigeria, which is the case study in this paper, not only has religion being the main cause of crisis, violence, maiming, destruction of holy sites, killings and destruction of properties worth billions of naira, leading to under-development. Religion has also remained the breeding ground for hatred, jealousy, unforgiveness, reprisal attacks through hate speeches; and has impacted negatively in this region of peace turning it to the land of blood and fear. (Zaka 2021:83-85)

Before religion was invented by name, man was religious. Therefore, it is not the question of man involving in any form of religion, but the facts are: understanding the religion properly, ability to live by the teachings and tenets of the religion, understanding why there are diverse forms of religion, properly perceiving how to relate with the object of worship, ability to differentiate ones religion from others, understanding why all humans tend to have different religions and yet we directly or indirectly have/believe in one God and that we all descended from the same root, understanding why One Supreme Being could be quite and allow different religions to exist; and worse still, some unconsciously tend to help this Supreme Being solve the problem of differences in religion not realizing that such actions only implies that the Supreme Being is weak and need human assistance to solve the problems, which is anathema. (Zaka 2021:83-84)

The truth is that, issues of religion are usually faith-based; for we actually can hardly in human terms explain things we teach, hear or believe in religion. Therefore, in all situations of life, there are those saddled with the grace or privilege of knowing better and so could give guidance to others on how to live

and even understand things of faith. These of course, are the religious leaders. Not only will these be expected to teach and guide their followers, but they should also be held responsible for the errors of their followers just as a father would be held responsible to an extent for the errors of his children, particularly when he failed to teach them aright. Serious interreligious conflict often instigated by hate speeches and inciting messages accompanied by destruction of holy sites, is becoming the order of the day in this enclave. Thereby, destroying the very fabrics that once bound this region together; pushing us many years backward educationally, economically, politically, economically, infrastructurally, in governance and so on. This is also destroying the future of these youths, the future of every nation. (Zaka 2021:84)

Therefore, in spite of the activities of the fanatical adherents of religion causing crisis today, religion remains:

1. The catalyst for national transformation and cultural development.
2. The agent for social change, reforms and resettles deviants, stimulates healthy social habits and checks anti-social behavior.
3. Provider for emotional security, spiritual and material support, codes of conduct that support economic and political growth.
4. The social glue that holds the society together, organizes the society into committee of interests, fosters solidarity and friendships, contributes to the maintenance of societal stability which breeds development, and ensures its continuity. (Zaka 2023:84-85)

2.2 Religion and Violence in Nigeria

Yinka Olomojobi rightly observed that, there is no disputing the fact that the problem of religious violence casts a serious doubt to the stability of every nation in which Nigeria has had her fair share. This is because without doubt, the country has recorded very bizarre experiences in the domain of religious violence. The causes of religious violence differ from one environment to another. (Yinka 2013:55-74) In Nigeria, certain constant factors breed and nurture religious violence with obvious consequences on the stability order of the citizens.

Different scholars (as can be seen below), gave many reasons for conflict in Nigeria as a whole and Northern Nigeria in particular as the focus of this paper. Ahuche

Peter Zaka raised many reasons as causes of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria. He opined that:

1. The problem facing our society especially moral decadence and insecurity is a collective irresponsibility of the religious leaders on one hand and the parents on the other. The religious leaders seem to have abandoned their God-given responsibility of turning back the hearts of men in this perverse generation to their creator and helping them to lead godly lives through religious instructions as contained in their holy books. But out of greed, deviated from the path of truth, are engaged in hate speeches, and championing violence against humanity responsible for the spate of destruction of lives and property. They have failed to mobilize their congregants to do the needful for the "Common Good" of all humanity. While the parents seem to abandon their responsibility of nurturing their children in the fear of the Lord. (Zaka 2021:84-86)

2. **Religion as cover for Ethnic unrest:** Most times in the Nigerian Society, everyone seems to be affiliated to a particular religion: Northern Nigeria is associated with or to Islam and Southern or Eastern Nigeria is associated with Christianity. Therefore, if a Northern gets into a fight with an Easterner, passersby see it as a Christian versus a Muslim. With the increase in Ethnic affiliations and clashes, when a person seems to be defeated in any dispute, he tuns it to a religious conflict to get the sympathy of his or her kins men on the religious platform since anything carrying religious coloration in Nigeria is usually not treated with kids gloves.

3. **Hate Speech:** Hate speech is any inciting message, statement or body language against another, which is capable of setting people against each other under any guise. It could be politically, culturally or religiously motivated but the aim is causing conflict. The major area religion is used to create crisis is hate speech from religious leaders and young people who are zealous are usually motivated into violence through this. Most of these youths are ardent adherents of their religion and have high regard for their religious clerics whom they see as representatives of the supreme being. Such people use either verbal or non-verbal expressions to pass the wrong message to gullible youths and religious fanatics the end result is disastrous. Some preachers particularly, the ignorant, half-baked or overzealous ones tend to use inciting messages on their podiums particularly in times of crisis to fuel the circle of violence and reprisal attacks. It is sad that the media is awash

with such speeches across the globe and in different languages. Mainly stirred by quack, greedy, untrained/half-baked theologians in all religions.

4. **Redundancy and Laziness among the Youth:** Redundancy and lack of utilization of opportunities for positive engagement are also among the stimulants that drive our youth into drug abuse and crimes. The fact remains that, some of our youths are lazy and want easy life, they overlook opportunities for positive engagements, instead they go looking for only white-collar jobs without even the pre-requisite training or qualifications. The population of unemployed youths in the country is so alarming that no government can produce enough jobs for all. Therefore, all must seek ways of sustaining themselves by being industrious.

5. **Rise in production and availability of Hard Drugs in the society:** The rate at which dangerous substances are produced by pharmaceutical companies and available in almost every patent medicine store in our localities now is alarming. Virtually every day, people are arrested across the country in possession or peddling hard drugs. Even, most of the suppliers of such illicit drugs from other parts of the Country have turned our enclave as a hub to supply these dangerous drugs as a means of enriching themselves at the detriment of our youths and continual existence.

6. **Negative Parenthood**. Emerging facts indicates that, most of the youth that are into all forms of crime including terrorism, banditry, drugs abuse, etc. are in one way or the other pushed to such negative attitude by their parents consciously or unconsciously. Today, many do not care about their children keeping late nights, etc. They are not concern about who their children hang out with. They do not care about the welfare or wellbeing of their children whom they left for either the house helps or neighbors, worse still some are left at the mercy of the outside world. Children want to share their challenges with their parents who are not always available, so they are left to take solace in drugs or join bad gangs. More so, continuous family crisis has torn many families apart and the children are usually at the receiving end of family crisis and divorce. Needless to say, even some parents are into many dubious acts and crimes and of course their children would learn from them and grow to be worse than their parents in this world of technology. The young people brought up in this kind of environment end up without any ambition or plan for their future, because they lack the necessary guidance and care to realize their full potentials. They end up in cults, drug addiction, organizing parties, leaving home or school at any time and by extension

spoiling other people's children and being threats to the society they are supposed to be a blessing to.

7. **Patronage by Members of the Political Class:** this paper agrees with Ibrahim Katsina that, another very disturbing challenge is the deliberate patronage of the vulnerable youths by members of the political class who patronizes them as political vanguards or thugs. These categories of youths are drawn closer by the political elites, giving them money to buy drugs and use them to harass their political opponents. Sadly, hardly you find a political figure without a retinue of political thugs around him or her. Instead of serving as role models for these youth, their handlers use them for a purpose and abandon them to be unleashing terror on the society. The youths are usually recruited by these evil politicians to also disrupt political procedures to their favour, etc. and usually, this is achieved by inducing them into drugs and other vices. (Zaka 2021:85-91)

8. **Role of the Media**. This is another great challenge that do fuel crisis in this nation and among the youths. False and stale news, rumours and lies are usually peddled by hungry journalists and overzealous bloggers/social media influencers to the detriment of our society and most of these circulating this information are youths. (Zaka 2018:202)

9. **Misunderstanding or misinterpretation of Scriptures and Misuse of Religion**: Owing to lack of in-depth understanding, outright ignorance, sheer mischief or whimsical and capricious interpretations/misinterpretation of scriptural texts towards predetermined ends championed by religious fanatics/fundamentalism.

3.1 CONFLICT

Conflict has varying definitions depending on the individual and the situation. This in itself shows the nature of conflict. Conflict is an inevitable part of human existence and dealings, and also a normal occurrence in any organization and among every people group at different times. It comes in different forms and shades, taking different approaches and nature. Conflicts may occur for several reasons ranging from: competition for supremacy, leadership style, scarcity of common resources, etc. They also occur for several reasons and also between different people like between co-workers, between the leaders and also between the leaders and the workers. Therefore, it is correct to say that, conflict is an inseparable aspect of people's as well as organizations' life. The problem with conflict is that every individual think and behaves

differently from others though in similar situations. Thus, conflict affects people to varying extent (Leung, 2010).

Definitions

Joseph Atang says, conflict has become an inevitable phenomenon in human existence. As long as there are social relationships between individuals and groups in the societies, conflict will persist. Although, conflict often initiate changes in the society, its violent form is negative and reverses societal progress, promoting poverty and anarchy hence it becomes imperative to mitigate violent conflict or ensuring that it does not escalate into violence. Bernard Oladosu Omisore, defines Conflict as a "state of discord caused by the actual or perceived opposition of needs, values and interests between formal authority and power and those individuals and groups affected." Coser says, "Conflict is a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralise, injure or eliminate their rivals." (1968:232).

So, conflicts which are inevitable in our day-to-day activities can lead to many hazards to the detriment of any people group: violent crisis, disunity, disruption of the peace, infringement on the rights of individuals (religion, association, business, etc.), Destruction of lives and properties, etc.; And so, some see conflict as evil and a thing to be avoided as much as possible. However, in the last few decades, many scholars have changed their views concerning conflict. Conflict is now seen as having the potential for positive growth. Therefore, it is important to note that not all conflicts are bad. There may be positive and negative parts of a conflict and so conflicts should not be a source of fear because it at times carries positive results if managed properly. Therefore, efforts should always be made to ensure that the causes of conflicts are addressed as soon as they are noticed; as early recognition and paying attention to the conflicting parties and negotiation between them with the aim of resolving conflicts is vital and yields positive result. But it is important to note also that, force or intimidation should never be used because they are most times counter-productive. (Zaka Leadership Training Manual 2023:2)

3.2 Conflicts: The Global Scenario

Conflict as observed by Galtung and other experts is not peculiar to Africa, in fact it is a universal reality that every human society has to contain with. Global

scenario of conflicts has shown that for several decades, terrorism as one of the most challenging experience of humanity hascontinued to remain a serious global threat. It almost tempts someone to conclude that there is nowhere that is safe around the world. The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) has reported that deaths caused by terrorism has increased by 22% translated into figure as 8,352; this is the highest level since 2017. (https://www.visionofhumanity.org/terrorism-worsens-as-global- conflict-drives-risk-of-new-wave/ (1).

3.3 Conflicts: African Continental Scenario

From the report of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) an initial overview of the reports indicate that Africa has experienced so much conflicts like any other continents of the world. Though the conflicts are mainly dealt with as they arise, but at times not so effective as expected. This usually reduces differing types of conflicts in all the APRM member states to their political causes rather than permitting a broader consideration of other contributing factors. It is clear from the APRM (8th March 2022) report that;

> "that each country has its own unique experience and mix of conflicts. However, there are certain similarities and recurring conflicts present in many countries. There is an assessment of how the APRM reports can provide an opportunity to better understand the dynamics of the conflicts occurring in the African States, offer insight into patterns and lessons to be learnt and prompt a conversation about how to collaborate better to tackle conflicts and their underlying causes" (https://www.eisa.org/storage/2023/05/occasional-paper-2016-types-of-conflict-in-africa-how-do-the-aprm-reports- address-conflict-south-africa-eisa.pdf.(accessed: 12/04/2024).)

The APRM has 55 African Countries as its members. According to the APRM it is for "Africa's Self-Assessment for Good Governance. A Specialized Agency of the African Union (AU), the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was initiated in 2002 and established in 2003 by the African Union in the framework of the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). APRM is a tool for sharing experiences, reinforcing best practices,

identifying deficiencies, and assessing capacity-building needs to foster policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regionaland continental economic integration".

It is clear that almost all African countries have experienced some form of conflict. Noting the fragile circumstances and transitions each have experienced, from independence struggles to post independence conflict, to the search for stability ad state-building process, have left scars and unaddressed issues that have created the sources of more conflicts. Gluhbegovic made a critical observation that (new sources of tension are constantly being woven into the old, causing wide spread harm, people are being displaced and deprived of opportunities for education, healthcare and employment." (Gluhbegovic 2016:1)

3.4 Conflicts: Nigeria's Experience

Violent Conflicts in Nigeria has been on for several decades, as a result of that; thousands of lives and valuable properties have been destroyed. The happenings appeared as if Nigerians are reluctant about finding solutions to the violent conflicts.[6] With this violence happenings year in year out, Nigeria is now being described as one of the worst places one could find himself or herself in the world. In fact, Chinua Achebe expressed the situation thus: "…is only a masochist with an exuberant taste for self-violence will pick Nigeria for a holiday…" (11).

The Anglican Archbishop of Owerri Ecclesiastical Province and Bishop of Okigwe South Diocese, Most Rev. Dr. David Onuoha warned that: "…if measures were not put in place to check the country's drift that Nigerians may soon reach their breaking point. He said indications were rife that Nigerians were fast…" (https://www.google.com/search). Onuoha added that, "Wemust strongly resist the temptation of falling into the hands of our enemies, including bandits andterrorists, who will not miss any opportunity to overrun this country, should there be any breakdown of law and order" (https://www.google.com/search).

In the observation of many media platforms, Aljazeera specifically states that; "the Nigerian government has failed to protect the masses, especially for decades". This is the situation seen in Plateau State, Adamawa State and other States, according to some reports, citizens calling for self-defense is admitting failure." (Aljazeera https://www.youtube.com/). In fact, apart from the findings that Nigeria, especially the Northernpart is the most fertile ground for conflicts, an author has declared that the world deadliest terror group is found in Nigeria, and specifically in the North, why Nigeria is not able to take a decisiveaction on that is incomprehensible (https://theconversation.com/why-boko-haram-is-the-worlds- deadliest-terror-group-54216).

Aside the fact that the conflicts have been so destructive across the country, these conflicts have been reported by several authors as unbearably destructive and responsible for much of the development setback of the Country (Danfulani 2002:1). Again, most of the authors agree to the established fact that the conflicts have their roots in the historical configuration or amalgamation of the British Colonial administration. They also agree that the initial decisions which gave birth to some of the major conflicts; like the civil war and the first coup gave rise to several other subsequent conflicts; especially the ethno-religious conflicts which Nigeria continued to experience up to this time. Danfulani further explains that "…ethno-religious conflicts are very rampant among various ethnic Communities; and that "Conflict has become very popular in Nigeria". (Danfulani 2002:1)

3.5 The Dynamics and types of the Conflicts in Nigeria.

Nigeria has not rested from violent conflicts since her independence in 1960 from Britishcolonial masters. The country stretching from north to south and west to east has been frequently plagued or bedeviled by violent deadly conflicts that appeared to have no end. These violent conflicts that have been ravaging every part of the country among others include ethnic conflicts, religious conflicts, political conflicts, terrorism, militancy, youth restiveness, electoral violence, armed robberies, farmers-herders conflicts and the list can continue. From its colonial period and after the colonial period, that is after the independence until now the country's story has always been coloured by multi-faceted conflicts, different levels of deadly violence, warfare, and turbulence.

1. Danfulani rightly observes furthermore that; "The conflicts that occur in Taraba, conflictsof the Tiv and the Jukun and those of Jos; that is conflicts in central and northern Nigeria are riding on religious card" (www.journals.aphriapub.com). With this situation, Nigerians appeared to be no strangers to violent conflicts owing to the fact that being a multi-religious and multi- ethnic country, and a complex multi-cultural society with more than 400 distinct languages (Federal Ministry for Information, Abuja 2014; NPC 2006), such a society with multiple socio- economic problems, with a population of more than 216 million people(https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/1241422 (Accessed 20/12/2023). In fact, from this same source; the National Bureau of Statistics has estimated the population of the Country tobe more than 216,783,381 (there are other sources that agree on 226 million as Nigeria's population) conflicts of violent nature are expected, but we must admit that population does not necessarily brings violent conflicts. There must be more to this, because Nigeria is not the country so much populated, in fact, Nigeria's population is nothing compared to India that has nearly 1.5 billion, what of China that has more than 1.400 billion in 2023, according to the National Bureau of Statistics of China, still they are not experiencing the type of violent conflict like Nigeria? (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/jan/17/china-population-decline- accelerates-as-birthrate-hits-record-low), (The Guardian News 17th January, 2024).
2. This paper observed that, one thing which has beenrepeatedly clear about conflicts in Nigeria; the crises is mostly tilted to take religious dimension, or what is often referred to as 'religious coloration' in Nigeria. Haribarren revealed in an article that the UN secretaryGeneral has confirmed to the international community that' "Boko Haram has become the deadliest terrorist group in the world." (https://theconversation.com/why-boko-haram- is-the-worlds-deadliest-terror-group-54216. Making the Christmas evemessage by the then president of the Country Mohammadu Buhari false; that his country had"technically won the war" against the Islamist group Boko Haram (https://www.voanews.com/a/buhari-nigeria-has-technically-defeated-

boko- haram/3116928.html).

3. Maitatsine genocide in 1987 which the north can never recover from is another conflict having religious connotation that rocked Northern Nigeria. Maitatsine is the nickname of Mohammed Marwa (a fanatical and controversial Islamic Preacher), the erstwhile leader of an Islamic controversial movement in Northern Nigeria that arose between 1980 and 1985. The word is Hausa, meaning: "The one who damns" (cf. Maitatsine, https://en.wikipeia.org/wiki/Maitatsine. 2/3/19 The Maitatsine Riots/Religious Literacy Project. https://rlp.hds.harvard.edu/faq/maitatsine-riots. 2/3/19. (Zaka 2020:83)
4. *Boko Haram (Jama'atuAhlis Sunna Lidda'awatiWal-Jihad)* is a terrorist organisation in northeast. They are a people who are committed to the propagation of the prophet's teaching on *Jihad*. The words are from Hausa meaning, "Western Education is sacrilege or forbidden." It was started by Mohammed Yusuf between 2001 and 2002 as a peaceful Islamic splinter group. The politicians exploited it for electoral purpose. But in 2009, *Boko Haram* turned to violence, especially after its leader, was killed while in police custody. (cf. Zaka, Ahuche Peter. The Impact of the United Missionary Church of Africa in Kebbi South Senatorial District, Kebbi State, Nigeria. *A Ph.D. Thesis Presented to the Department of Religions, Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin. In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of Doctor of Philosophy in Christian Studies.* Sept. 2018. p.12; Adamolekun, Taiye, A Historical Perspective in the Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria since 1914(*Journal of Arts and Humanities (JAH), Vol. 2, No.5,* June, 2013. http://www.theartsjournal.org/index.php/site/article/download/110/109. (18/1/14). (Zaka 2020:83-84)
5. The Cause of most recent conflict events that affected most parts of the country, from 2010- 2017 are categorized by world bank as follows: North-East has 73% of the conflicts as outright terrorism, while just 7% are linked to land or resource access conflicts, 15% is attributedto cultism and other types of criminality and 5% shared between ethnicity, politics, religion and personal disputes. Conflicts in the North-Central has 21% attributed to terrorism, 55% to land use or resource access, cultism or criminality, 16% linked to cultism or criminality, while 8% is shared

between Ethnicity, Politics, Religion and personal disputes. Conflicts in the South-regionis distributed as follows: 19% Land or Resource Access, 36% is linked to Cultism or Criminality, while 9% is attributed to Ethnicity, Politics, or Religion, while 32% accounts for personal disputes (Azad et al. 2018:15).

6. A report from the 2024 Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, Switzerland has reflected that clearly Nigeria in the last few decades is "involved in two parallel non-international armed conflicts against the non-state armed groups Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP)". The report again indicates that Nigeria's neighbors have been so helpful and supportive "there is a Non-International Armed Conflict (NIAC) between ISWAP andBoko Haram. Since 2014, the Multinational Joint Task Force – which includes troops from Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Benin, and Nigeria – has intervened in the conflict in support of the Nigerian Government, thus leaving unchanged the qualification of the situation as non- international.
7. Another major type of conflict in this enclave is on the issue of Indigene vs Settler status. who is an indigene. The abuse of this label can foster deeper socioeconomic inequalities, given that indigenes enjoy preferential access to land, schools, development spending, and public jobs. Observably, these inequalities feed into violence, although righting inequality may not be sufficient to end violence in every case.
8. The Farmer-Herder Conflict was described by Amnesty International (AI) and theInternational Crisis Group (ICG) as the "Nigeria's gravest security challenge" in 2018 (https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer- herder-violence. This form of crisis was seen by many as a new ploy to continue the bastardization of the Nigerian resources. States mostly affected or impacted bythis new phase of conflict were mostly the middle belt and North-Eastern states; Benue,Adamawa, Zamfara, Plateau, Nassarawa, Borno, Yobe, Kaduna and Taraba States. It can alsobe understood that citizens resorting to protests, robberies, kidnappings and other forms ofviolence can be an indication of discontent as observed by Oyebode that, "Engaging in violentconflict by different segments of the state, as means of registering discontent on bad governance, has become a

perennial occurrence" (Oyebode 2022:117-128). Observing carefully, it is obvious to concludethat the killer herdsmen are the extension of the same group of the armed bandits who aresuspected to must have come from the neighboring countries.

It has been estimated that the Farmers-Herders crisis has killed not less than 3,641 peoplebetween 2016 and 2018. The previous crisis from 1980 prepared a fertile ground for the emergence of other deadly groups in the North, especially the emergence of the most-deadly group, the 'Boko Haram'. this situation was seen as the riot of Maitatsine in 1980 re surfacing in a different form. Several reports have indicated that the Boko Haram insurgency actually started in 2009, but from all indications their activities have already started far back as 2002 under theleadership of one Mohammed Yusuf.

9. Another area of concern is the recent spate of kidnapping for ransom where the victims ended up being killed even after the ransom is paid. The social and print media are awash with such cases such that we seem to loss count of these menace.

4.1 CAUSES OF ETHNORELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

1. The Colonial Legacy: Those that subscribed to this understanding assert that 'the sources and consequences of Africa's internal conflicts have their roots in colonialism, the subsequent processes of de-colonization and state formation, and the ensuing crisis of nation building' has continued to remain one of Africa's major problems. Quite a number of authors have indicted the de-colonization process when they observe that many African countries experience terrible colonial roots, as the contradictions of the colonial state were passed on to theindependent states through a flawed process of de-colonization. As Cohen quoted by Achankeng that "the modern African state was createdby colonial powers out of ethnic and regional diversities, and rendered conflictual by gross inequities in power relations, and in the uneven distribution of national wealth and development opportunities". (Achankeng 2013:1-2) In other words, the implanted conflict phenomenon had been there for many of the conflicts experienced in post-independence Africa. Aligning with this viewpoint Wale opined that the problems being experienced by modern African States are colonial based and arise

out of Africa's colonial experience. General Obasanjo described in a statement that Africa is the continent with the greatest number of conflicts.

2. One of the theories of the causes of ethno-religious conflicts as observed by prominent scholars Like Matthew Hassan Kukah and Pandang Yamsat, among others has been the issue of "political exclusion" due to incompetency and leaders who do not fear God, sometimes on the basis of several reasons including ethnicity and religion, which could mean among other things the denialto access what is usually referred to as "the national Cake" political opportunities; and fears of religious and cultural domination, among tribes in the middle belt who are mostly Christians (Adebayo 2010:213-225)**.** Adebayo captured the beginning of the religiously motivated conflict which was the Maitatsine's riots, in his words the first riots "…were religiously inspired in Northern Nigeria" (https://humanglemedia.com/timeline-nigerias-brutal-history-of-violence-and-deaths). The situation is that whatever the cause of a violent conflict in Nigeria, there is always the tendency of turning quickly into a 'religious crisis'. This is because as already observed (Okpanachi 2012; Tuki 2024) people are easily mobilized along religious lines in Nigeria.

Zaka Peter Ahuche in looking at the causes of the persecution of Christians in Northern Nigeria, which are clearly evident as causes of ethno-religious conflict in this enclave are listed below:

3. The Usman Dan Fodio's *Jihad* Legacy: Most arguments have to do with the issue of Muslims fighting a *Jihad* against Christians which is seen as an attempt to eradicate Christianity. Even Ahmadu Bello was quoted to have said: "the father of enlightenment and good in the law was the prophet, Usman Dan Fodio, and the work of salvation for all the people which he nobly, undertook has now been handed to me. I dedicated myself totally to its completion." These and similar statements led people like Mohammed Yusuf and his cohorts to start what is today called *Boko Haram*. But arguments still abound among Islamic scholars on the true meaning of the word *Jihad*

4. Nigeria's membership of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC): It was established in Morocco between 22nd and 25th September, 1969. But on 12th January,

1986, Nigeria applied and was admitted as a full member. This sparked off serious crisis and has remained one of the major causes of religious unrest and Christian persecution in the country. The fanatical Muslim leaders still do anything possible including sabotage, killings, coercion, manipulation, subtlety etc. to enforce the objectives of the OIC.

5. The Islamic Legal System - *Shari'a*: This crisis first sprang up at the Constituent Assembly in 1977 when the Muslim members of the Assembly walked out in protest against the resolution not to include *Shari'a* in the constitution of Federal Court of appeal. To sustain this struggle, in 1999 the governor of Zamfara State, Alhaji Ahmed Sani Yerima championed the revival of the saga by enacting it into law in his state, and many northern governors took after him and the fracas that ensued could only be left for memory. Christians in these States are still suffering under this scourge.

6. Religious Supremacy: The act of "Soul-Winning" carried out by some churches leading to the conversion of some Muslims has stirred them to start using different means including force, manipulations, denial of rights, coercion, etc. to maintain their members and get converts from Christianity. The advent of radical Islamic groups like the Shiites and *Boko Haram* has worsened the situation. They believe Islam is the only religion just as Christians profess that Christianity is the only way of salvation.

7. Media propaganda: "…the media have thrown away their integrity and would want payment for every bit of information they carry, hence the defects in their reportage…." Bias, unconfirmed, untrue, and doctored reports tailored at suiting the reporters and their sponsors or audiences, thereby inciting carnage are now rampart. Unfortunately, the Christians are either, not buoyant enough or do not value the use of the media to properly disseminate and store information. The Print and Social Media have most times contributed to the crisis, reprisal attacks etc. in Nigeria. Any time there is crisis, you find inciting messages and gory photo-shopped pictures including videos from other countries or films in circulation to depict what happened in the crisis area.

8. Government indifference seen in continuous shielding of perpetuators and lack of the will in maintaining the rights and safety of citizens. The slogan has always been, "…the government will bring the perpetuators to book." But it is either there is no such "book" or the "book" is lost. Similarly, selective justice is now the order of the day with religion as the determining factor and not who is guilty, "in many places in northern part of Nigeria, religion plays a major role in determining "who" becomes "what" in the society; social legitimacy is determined by religious value judgment." (Zaka 2020: 74-75)

4.2 Effects of Ethnic/Religious Conflict in Northern Nigeria

While the effects are numerous, this paper will present a few here:

- Extreme violence leading to deaths and destruction of property worth billions of naira.
- Looming hunger, economic decline and enhanced poverty as many become displaced, maimed, farms destroyed, etc.
- Escalated humanitarian crises with human rights abuses evident all around the society and most especially in IDP camps.
- Environmental degradation and pollution leading to health hazards, destruction of ozone layer, etc.
- Misrepresentation of the positive values of these cultures and religion.
- Extremists hijack identities and silent the larger peaceful majority.
- Looking at the role of ethnicity and religion in Nigeria, we will be said not to be contributing to global peace, instead, these identities deepen animosity, suspicion and distrust among religions.
- Hate advocacy and preaching has seemed to hijack religious public space
- Disrespect for the human diversity and plurality
- Love is missing and increasingly being extinguished while hate is gaining more and more. (Shedrack 2023:20)
- Deviation from Human dignity and proper culture (lives of chicken even better than human lives; we have become inhumane, looting all kinds of treasuries – we can never be satisfied with blood money and the tears of widows/orphans and the poor)
- OXFAM estimated that Africa loses more than US$18 billion a year due to conflicts and armed violence. These conflicts and violence share similarities but are alsodistinctively different. We can assume that the

conflicts in Africa are a unique mix of these similarities and differences. (Duarte 2023:2,4)

- More widows, orphans, displaced and maimed persons are produced leading to promiscuity, abuse of human rights, looming hunger, health hazards and the likes.

5.1 Basis for Ethnic and Religious Peace

Ahuche Peter postulated the below as basis for peace in spite of our religious and ethnic differences and affiliations:

1. **Concept of the Primal Human Ethics**

This refers to the fact that in spite of the differences in our races; ethnicity, religion, colour of skin, language groups, and geographical locations; we all have a common primal ancestry. This very social fact is the most important basic human core value which is the foundation of human relations, peace and unity, and also extinguishes discrimination, prejudice, bias, stereotype, and preferential and differential treatment of people. Instead, it breeds love, unity, and above all the concept of the common good; as we relate with one another the concept of "*Ubuntu*" comes to bear. The understanding of our common Primal ancestry forms the foundations of morality and ethics. "As human beings, we all have the same human nature, identity and dignity. For a human being to feel superior to another is based upon false or counterfeit knowledge which may lead to self-centeredness and pride." Craig Bullock says, "We need to be guided by a power greater than our inflated egos, by soul force. We need to open our hearts so that we can recognize our oneness with all humanity. We need to serve something larger than ourselves." It is when we do this that we can truly express the concept of the Primal human ethics.

2. **Creational Responsibility**

All human beings are creatures of God, and for this reason, we have creational responsibilities to both God our Creator and all creation, human beings and nature. Turaki puts it thus: "Our primary responsibility is rooted in the act and fact of God's creation, and not in culture, religion, philosophy or science. The human being as a created being primarily preceded human creation of culture, religion, philosophy, science or ethnicity. We worship God because He is our Creator. We respect and revere creation and other creatures because we are all co-

creatures of God." Divisions will persist, both in society and in the Church, but we can show a better way. Freed in Christ, we "owe nothing to anyone except to love one another." Love lived out in generous service to the neighbour as described by Paul in 1 Cor. 13:4-8 thus: "… Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends…." Love goes out in service for the common good. (Zaka 2022:236)

5.2 Combatting Ethnoreligious Conflict in Northern Nigeria

In addressing this menace of Ethnoreligious conflict which has ravaged Northen Nigeria, below are suggestions by the researcher and contributions from other notably scholars that the researcher deemed necessary to glean from their contributions. These roles are divided into three major parts viz:

5.2.1 Role of Religious Leaders

From time immemorial, man has developed extreme loyalty and trust towards his leader of religion, first because of the intuitive belief that religion is a way of life ordained by God, secondly because man, as a religious animal believes that the religious leaders are given by God Himself who decreed obedience and loyalty to them. Therefore, leaders of religions command respect and loyalty especially by their followers which is a divine status. However, along the line some of these leaders of religions took advantage of this divinely ordained obedience and loyalty, and begun to abuse them by exploiting their followers and preaching falsehood; sometimes on purpose orchestrated by selfish desires and sometime due to ignorance.

In spite of all these, they remain a veritable tool not only for the dissemination of anti-peace messages but also in building and promoting the culture of interfaith cooperation/collaboration, religious harmony, integrity and sound moral values. Hence the need for interfaith cooperation to be championed particularly by the religious leaders in the following ways:

1. Prevail on the Government to engage and Regulate the Media for Effective Public Mobilization Against Hate Speech, Religious/Ethnic Violence and

Juvenile Delinquency: The Media is one of the most effective tools in mobilization and sensitization of the public on any matter of national interest and against the dangers of drug abuse, religious extremism, hate speech, etc. Unfortunately, the Nigerian situation has shown that the social media seems to be the bane of peaceful coexistence, spread of hate speech, inciting violence and reprisal attacks. It seems to be a tool of spreading religious extremism, destruction of holy sites and other vices. The government while using the positive side of the social media, should also put all measures and machineries in place to control the excesses of this means of communication. The activities the social media should also be censored with punitive measures against social media influencers and bloggers abusing this vital tool of information to spread false rumours and other inciting hate speeches. (Lai Mohammed)

2. Collaborate with the Government to deradicalize religious fundamentalists and fanatics both youth and religious leaders.

3. Unity among Religious Leaders: If religious figures come together, it shows communities that there is no reason why they should see their identity in conflict with one another. But that they have more in common than that which divides them. If they know they have the support of religious leaders, it empowers communities to work towards interfaith relations and peace.

4. Preaching and teaching on peaceful coexistence: They should dwell more on what binds us together than on what divides us. They should concentrate on our common humanity and the sanctity of human lives and sacredness of holy sites. They should also emphasize on the benefits and true value of Religion. (Yau 24-25)

5. Exemplary lives: They should sue for peace and interfaith dialogue; and avoid extreme perception. They should lead by example

6. Regulating against hate preachers: Avoid hate speeches and raise policies/punitive measures against violators. Each religious body should set preaching boards to screen and censored preachers to monitor such religious extremists and hate preachers.

7. Every leader comes from a particular religion; therefore, each religion and religious leaders should inculcate the fear of God, accountability and the fact that leadership is a higher calling that everyone involved in it would give account before his creator on the day of retribution. When the youth grow with this knowledge and form of teaching, we will have a better society (Ecc. 12:1-3).

8. There should be **Adequate teaching of the word of God:** This is the role of custodians of religious instructions particularly pastors and Imams. They are to take deliberate effort to teach, nurture and bring up the young ones in the knowledge and fear of God. The church should engage the youths in seminars, teachings, especially the issue of discipleship and create awareness on the danger of drug abuse so to save souls for the kingdom of Christ. just as Apostle Paul encourage the people of Thessalonica saying that 'encourage the timid, help the weak and be patient with everyone'. 1Thesselonians 5: 14.

9. Dialogue and walking the talk and not only talking the walk. It is not primarily a search for agreement or solutions, although it can serve as a foundation for collaborative action and coexistence. In dialogue, participants are not expected to seek or find "common ground" no one is asked to compromise their core religious-ethnic beliefs or values. They commit to not attempting to persuade, convince, criticize or condemn the viewpoint of others. Dialogue is one approach, among many others, to bridging differences and building peace. Dialogue is not about positional negotiations, dialogue is about listening to the other in a resilient manner with an open mind to understand one's point of view, it is not about promoting one's interest over that of the other, it is about respecting the other and being sensitive to value differences. Dialogue is based on the principle of Do No Harm. Do to others what you will like them do to you. Dialogue is about pluralism and religious freedom, it is about freedom from fear want and dignity, and this must be defended by all religions if we will attain peaceful coexistence and sustainable development.

10. Promoting National peace and forgiveness. Calling for seminars, workshops, prayer sessions, etc. to seek God's face for all our inhumane treatments to one another. This may bring healing, thereby, fostering peaceful coexistence and nation-building.

11. Discouraging jungle justice, reprisal attacks and vengeance but promoting the spirit of forgiveness.

12. Promoting the teaching on peace, dialogue and religious harmony in all schools from the primary to the tertiary institutions to raise a generation that will not only tolerate one but would co-exist as it was before.

13. Encouraging the home front and parental responsibilities. (Zaka 2021:93-94).

14. Teach and promote the concept of the Common good: The "Common Good" is a phrase used to denote the once communal life of "*Ubuntu*" which seems to be eroding in our socio-religious lives today. For instance, the menace of Boko Haram would have been contained long ago if some in other parts of the country did not see it as a northern problem or a fight for Islam. Now everybody and all religions are living in fear of these deadly insurgents. Similarly, the COVID 19 pandemic is still ravaging parts of the world because some people think their personal "freedoms" are more important than the wellbeing of others. Therefore, many are dead and some are in hospitals while the medical workers are once again drawn back to the hospitals away from their loved ones and endangering their lives because there are people who refuse to get vaccinated; professing it to be their rights of "freedom" which must not be infringed upon by any government, among whom are Christians. Personal "freedom," is utterly opposed to the common good in most cases. (Zaka 2022:235)

5.2.2 Role of the Government

i. **Mobilization of the Citizenry on the dangers posed by the trend.** While everyone must be involved in this regard, however, the government must lead in the campaign and bring all concerned stakeholders (Religious leaders, Traditional Institutions, security operatives, members of the academia, etc.) on the table for adequate and meaningful information on this. All hands must be on deck towards finding lasting solutions to the menace, as the Government alone cannot be held responsible. Members of the business community and the political class etc. and the elites from the States should be encouraged to invest in the state which will create job

opportunities and also promote Internally Generated Revenue (IGR), and by extension enhance the economic activities in the State.

ii. **Partner with youth leaders and youth organizations for advocacy and training of the youths.** There are many trades these youths can be engaged in today like: recircling waste products/materials, environmental protection, building and construction, and other areas of meaningful development. if the youths can be mobilized through their recognized mediums for violence, they can also be mobilized for peaceful coexistence and good works. The government should key into this move to harness these potentials.

iii. **Partnership with NGOs, CSOs, and other stakeholders/Donor Agencies:** This will provide the needed support to the initiative through advocacy, funding, training and partnering with these stakeholders, both local and foreign towards this great feat will put Nigeria again among the comity of nations with high integrity and meaningful development.

iv. **Take drastic measures to cut down the supply chain of hard drugs and other narcotics.** The Federal State and Local Government should in collaboration with Security Agencies, the Judiciary, Traditional and Religious leaders come up with drastic measures to cut down the supply chain of hard drugs and other narcotic substances. This is very vital in the sense that without stimulants, the youths can be easily tamed. This of course must be championed and led by the Federal Government, bringing the above stakeholders at a round table towards this agenda. (Ibrahim 8)

v. **Empowerment of the Youth**: While there seems to be such programmes in the country, but it is obvious that by the nature of nepotism and tribalism that has eaten deep into the fabrics of both the civil and religious life of the Nigerian society, the mode of selection of the beneficiaries has been negatively affected. It is important to ensure that those to be selected should be serious minded youths in order to ensure sustainability and encourage others to be of good character. If the selection of beneficiaries is based on political, tribal, religious, etc. consideration, the beneficiaries will regard the opportunity as a largess, and as such will not utilize it properly. The government in collaboration with other well-meaning citizens or donor agencies concerned about youth development should be

encouraged to design and implement strategies that are real and sustainable.

vi. **Creation of Job and economic opportunities:** since lack of economic opportunities jeopardizes the lives of promising young people in Nigeria, leading such idle minds to becoming the Devil's workshop. In line with the above, the government should provide avenues to make these youths self-reliant by creating relevant jobs according to the training of these youths and open avenues for them to be useful. (Zaka 2021:91-93)

5.2.3 Role of the Parents

The home front is the most crucial place for leadership training and godly virtues to be inculcated in the children and of course the future leaders. (Rikka 2-8). It is the place of molding godly leaders and youths who would champion national development. in the past, when a child misbehaves, he brings disrepute not only to the immediate family but to the extended family and the community at large, and so, all are involved in the training and discipline of an erring child. (Rikka 9). But today, these virtues and training seems to be eluding our society. Therefore:

1. There is need for us to go back to this communal life of raising godly children who would represent us all over the world.
2. Parents, guardians and communities should take extra efforts in monitoring the behaviors, attitudes of their children, and always ensure that they find out the type of company their children have.
3. They should as much as possible regulate how they over pamper or treat their children/wards.
4. There should be continuous guidance and counseling to those affected in order to assist them abandon the negative habits.
5. Parents should live exemplary lives for their children to emulate, for the state of each society is seen in the family particularly on the lives of the parents. (Rikka 6)
6. The youths should be encouraged and allowed to do things by themselves, by this, they can know the value of life and living. Productive children are a source of pride for their parents and the nation.
7. Parents should try to understand the reality of the problem at hand, admit the fact that it is a threat to the future of our youth, and become resolute to overcome the challenge. Unless this trend is checkmated, the future of our

> youth and by extension the general security environment in our societies will continue to be endangered; even the likelihood of escalation of the problem cannot be over emphasized. (Zaka 2021:94-95).

According to Shedrack Gaya Best, ethnoreligious conflict in Nigeria, "is a situation where adherents of different religions disagree, fight or confront each other in a dysfunctional manner. More often, this is hardly about religious content, rather over political, economic, territorial and psychological resources. This has a long history in Nigeria, dating back to pre-colonial times. From the Dan Fodio jihad to colonial era, identities were sharpened. The decolonization period (Willinks Commission) and early independence saw religion crippling into national issues. The main issue today is access to political control of the Nigerian state. These appointments, postings, contracts, allocations, privileges and perceived marginalization. In extreme cases, the rights of religious minorities are being tasked." (Shedrack 2023:12)

Conclusion

Several scholars have referred to Nigeria's conflicts and riots as extreme "ethno-religiousviolence" due to how deadly they have been and at times the religious coloration they tend to bear. In fact, Boer added as a title of one of his many volumes; "Nigeria's decades of Blood" (Boer 2003:38-95) The scholars like Olomojobi, Fwatshak, Datiri and Danfulani generally observe that these conflicts are more complex, repeated and worse with always colossal loss of lives and destruction of properties.

Let me conclude this paper by quoting for Ahuche Peter Zaka thus:

> The original purpose of God is that religion should promote peace and sustainable human development. Religion offers man the understanding of the universe and provides rules and regulations that moderate human behaviour. In this context, every religious person attempts to live a godly life according to their religions. unfortunately, today, each time the word "religion" is mentioned around the world, we tend to focus our minds on crises. Peace is nonnegotiable, it is expedient for development and freedom of religion. No one can say he or she is religious when he works against the freedom of another. Some people are born into one

> religion or the other; some hear and are converted into it while some are taught and they also teach it but none of us is the originator. Comparison and understanding of one another's position are key to our peaceful co-existence, because we would have been like those we accuse if not worse, if we were in their shoes. We are to bring such into our faith through peaceful and convincing presentation of our religious beliefs and not through violence. Our differences do not have to divide us and lead to conflict or violence. We need to re-humanize one another by putting down the reversed telescope through which we have been viewing one another and to recognize our common humanity. If the Creator had so wished, then surely, He could have created us all with the same faith. Since we are of different faiths and He allowed it, we must work to find a way to communicate, connect and coexist. We differ, as human beings, in many ways and this can be a source of mutual enrichment, learning and understanding instead of war.

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Recommendations

1. Change our perception and negative attitudes towards people of other faiths and ethnic groups to the attitude of love and compassion for peaceful coexistence which is a panacea for meaningful development.
2. Promote the spirit of forgiveness and mercy as against vengeance and reprisal attacks against people of other faiths.
3. Sustain or return to the legacy of Luther and the founding fathers of our denominations in Northern Nigeria to the promotion of sound education and provision of sound education and other social amenities like: good roads bore holes, hospitals, etc.

- The state must play the role of moderating and uniting identities
- Participation at the public space must reflect constitutional and federalism spirit
- Faiths and identities must be forced to promote what unites people
- Thus, severe consequences for messages of division, hate and animosity
- Continue with the programmes promoting national unity and integration: NYSC, unity schools, inter-ethnic marriages, etc.
- Promote dialogue and peacebuilding activities
- Target younger populations and school age with peace education
- Oppose same faith institutions and support mixed faith ones.
- Anti-prejudice and anti-bias at the public space: education, awareness, enlightenment.
- Laws and legal frameworks must be in place and be updated from time to time
- The enforcement of our laws must be given priority. (Shedrack 2023:12.)
- Zaka opined that. "…Insisting on forgiveness and peace with God which makes peace with men possible. Because, revenge at first sight is sweet when being contemplated but it is bitter to carry out because, the target of

revenge deserves to be hurt so as to feel exactly if not more than what we feel but God's people never take revenge as an option. This was valid for Joseph, David, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and many other great men and women. When you suffer injustice of any kind the best thing to do is allow it make you better than bitterness to control you." (Zaka 2020:82)

- On reprisal attack which only increased and continued the circle of violence, we have not achieved any meaningful progress thus far with our reprisal attacks, because they are usually on the wrong and innocent persons and in the course, even Christians were killed because they dressed like Muslims.

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