

**CHUKWUEMEKA THANKGOD NWACHIBUNDOYA**

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY**

**19/SM09/016**

**GST 122**

**100L**

### **RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN NIGERIA**

Religion is the belief in and worship of a super human controlling power, especially a personal God or gods. Conflicts is a serious disagreement or argument typically a protracted one. It can also be seen as a clash of interest. Religious conflict is therefore a situation that arises as a follower or followers of one religious belief disagrees with another or others of different belief.

There are two types of religious conflicts, inter-religious conflicts and intra-religious conflict. Inter-Religious Conflict is misunderstanding that occur between members of two or more religions e.g. Christian and Muslims while intra-religious conflict is a misunderstanding between member of same religion e.g. Catholics and orthodox, Sunni and Shia.

There are various causes of religious conflicts in Nigeria. These include, non-recognition of one another, campaign of hatred and blackmail, Lack of genuine desire to understand each other's belief and extremism. Muslims in particular believe that Christianity does not recognize Islam as a religion that is entitled to exist. Consequently Muslims refuse to recognize Christianity. Each religion refers to the followers of the other religion as infidels/unbelievers.

Both Christians and Muslims are actively involved in campaigns of hatred against each other. This is manifested in various forms including blocking each other's chances as demonstrated in the issues of Sharia and Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). Blackmailing and the distortion of facts caused the famous Kafanchan riot according to Bashir Isyaku and Imo.

Lack of genuine desire to understand each other's belief and culture is one of the causes of religious violence. It is true that, different institutions, secular and religious offer some courses under various names but a careful study of such programmes has shown that they were not intended to foster understanding and respect. Instead they are used as a means of blackmailing and incitement under the cover of academic freedom and dialogue.

Extremism is another cause of religious conflict. Extremism is based on poor knowledge (ignorance) of the teaching of the religion being defended by the group involved. Most adherents follow their religious leaders foolishly. They believe and extrapolate every erroneous teaching to ridiculous heights. Most followers make little effort to discover core value of their religion which is always centred on love, tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

The following are examples of religious conflict that took place in recent times. In the year 2000, conflict engulfed the city of Kaduna between Muslims and Christians over the implementation of Sharia Laws. Thousands of lives and properties worth millions were destroyed. Again on September 11th 2013 in Borno state, Boko Haram dressed in military uniforms attacked and burnt people majority of which were Christians. It was

recorded that 143 persons were killed. In 2014 July 27<sup>th</sup>, there was a communal attacks by youth groups in Muslim and Christian neighborhood on mosques and churches in the University of Jos. The same 2014, in Maikatako Muslims terrorists attacked Christians on Sunday morning killing at least eight and maiming others. Another took place on September 2015 in Yola where 24 women and children were murdered by Boko Haram in two village. The examples are too many to be mentioned.

The consequences of religious conflicts are indeed ugly and often irreversible. The greatest harm of religious conflicts is that they leave in its wake magnanimous loss of lives. In Nigeria, violent religious crisis more especially between the Christian and Muslims have claimed thousands of lives. In the same vein violent religious conflicts have often resulted in set back on infrastructure. Social infrastructure like schools, hospital, hospitals, health facilities/centres, etc are often time the target of destruction. In most cases the task of rebuilding destroyed properties becomes the daunting task for the federal and state government.

The recurrence of religious conflicts have untold effect on the economy of the nation. It is not only lives that are being lost but sources of livelihood, goods, relationships, goodwill, trust etc are being destroyed or carted away, leaving victims economically and emotionally handicapped.

Religious conflict is preventable. We can tackle the problem of religious conflicts in Nigeria through a well articulated fight against ignorance. It is advisable that every individual know the tenets of his or her religion. Every adherent must be self-accounting and be watchful of the teachings of their religious leaders. This is because, it has been

observed that self-seeking and ambitious religious leaders often capitalize on the ignorance and gullibility of their fellowship to manipulate them to ferment trouble with people of other religions. The government must ensure that religious leaders make their preaching persuasive rather than inciting or insulting. The government through their executive and legislative powers should make religious preachers to mind and weigh their utterance and actions.