ILESANMI ELISHA IBUKUNOLUWA

19/LAW01/121

PEACE AND CONFLICT

22ND NOVEMBER, 2020.

I am a youruba boy from south-west geopolitical zone Osun state to be exact and that is the section on which I would be talking about.

OSUN STATE

Background The struggle for the creation of Osun began as early as 1950. At that time, the present senatorial districts namely Osun West, Central and part of Osun East were subordinated towns under the administration of Ibadan District Native Authority. In their determination to get independence, traditional rulers and citizens of Osun Area submitted a petition to the British Colonial Administration in Nigeria demanding autonomy for Osun Division, with Osogbo proposed as the headquarters.

To realise their aim, they pursued this agenda further in 1951, when a Commission of Inquiry was set up the colonialists, headed by H.L Butcher primarily saddled with

investigating the crisis in Ibadan District Native Authority between Chief Salami Agbaje and Olubadan-in-Council. At this commission, named H.L Butcher Commission of Inquiry, a representation was made by people of Osun Area reiterating their resolve for autonomy. This demand was granted on March 17th 1951, thus recommending autonomy for Osun District Towns on April 1st 1951. The resilience and doggedness of the founding fathers and crusaders for the creation of Osun was rewarded on August 27th 1991, when the administration of the then military General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida created nine states with Osun created out of Oyo state and Osogbo was made the capital. It was a dream fulfilled and hope achieved.

Osun emboldens the history of a people whose quest for freedom, self-actualisation, determination and hope for a better tomorrow fought and won the battle for its creation. It was a dream fulfilled and hope achieved. The state has a considerable number of highly urbanised settlements. Some of the major towns are Osogbo. Ile-Ife, Ilesa, Ikirun, Iwo, Ede, Ila-Orangun and Ikire. Others include: Ipetumodu, Ejigbo, Ilobu, Gbongan, Okuku, Inisa, Ijebu-Ijesa, Ipetu-Ijesha, Ifon-Osun, etc. (http://www.nairaland.com/ 1898164/land-people-osun-history-facts).

Findings in Osun State (a) Highlights of Previous Security/Conflict issues (1) Ife-Modakeke Conflict. (2) Historical efforts were made by key actors, which included the Government of State of Osun, the former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Chief Olusegun Obasanjo) as well as groups and individuals, to curtail the inter-communal conflicts, and cultivate and sustain peace). (3) Ifon/Ilobu Conflict. (4) Oba-Oke/Oba-Isale Chieftaincy tussle. (5) State of Osun also recorded skirmishes over land-ownership and boundary conflicts in some parts of the state – which resulted in violence, the loss of lives and properties. (b) Highlights of State and Ooni of Ife’s Interventions Government Interventions (1) However, the establishment of the Peace Committee for Herders, Bororo and the farmers in the state has helped to settle most of these issues. (2) They have local organisations that consist of memberships by representatives of the Herderss, Bororos, Monarchs and the farmers in the state. (3) The local organisations meet weekly in their areas and also meet in Osogbo whenever issues arise. (4) They are very pleased with the current Governor on this initiative and have advised other states to do the same.

2016 STRATEGIC CONFLICT ASSESSMENT OF NIGERIA CONSOLIDATED AND ZONAL REPORTS ! 493

(5) Governor Rauf Aregbesola and his wife had invited the Herders and Bororo community and their women to the Government House. (6) The Governor entertained them and subsequently announced the inauguration of the Committee on Peaceful Co-existence between Herders/Bororo and Farmers in the State of Osun – which was established in June 2014. (7) The Committee consists of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Youth Engagement (MAFSYE), All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN), Representatives of Women in Farming (RWF), the Chairman of Herders in the state, Chairman of Bororos in the state, and Ministry of Commerce and Empowerment (MCE). (8) That, the establishment of Herders, Bororo and Farmers Committee, at the Local Government level has helped communication and reduced crisis. (9) The Committee, which meets regularly, has handled over 5,000 cases and that has helped to sustain peace between farmers and the herders. (10) The Governor recently signed an Act that bars animals from roaming the streets in the State of Osun; Government is also presently taking stock of the population of Herderss and their heads of cattle. (11) The Government also issued identity (ID) cards to all herders in the state. (12) The Governor also embarked on the ‘Saturday Walk-to-live Project’. Through this project, the Governor operated an open street-walk assembly where he and citizens with complaints and conflict issues had open-air discussions and dialogue on emerging critical issues that could degenerate into full-blown conflicts.

Ooni of Ife’s Interventions (1) The new Ooni of Ife has deliberately put-in efforts to construct and consolidate lasting peace between the Ife and Modakeke Communities. (2) It should be added that Ife and Modakeke has been experiencing sustainable peace since the emergence of the present Ooni of Ife. (3) Ooni’s policy of regularly personally visiting Obas, Baales and lower-ranked chiefs to cultivate, solicit and consolidate peaceful coexistence. (4) Ife and Modakeke are locations that can presently be considered as one of the most peaceful locations/areas/communities in the State of Osun and the SouthWest Geo-Political zone visited by the research team.

Profile of Intergroup Conflicts in the State of Osun Herders-Farmers (1) Herdsmen are accused in the State of Osun of grazing their cattle on farm settlements and destroying both food and cash crops. (2) This has led to attacks between farmers and herders, following the former’s efforts

to stop the herders from further destroying their farmlands and crops therein. (3) Committee on Peaceful Co-existence of Herders, Bororo and farmers in the State of Osun has classified herders into three categories: (i) The Herders; (ii) The newly-settled Bororo; (iii) The migrant Bororos. (4) The Herderss are perceived as being generally peaceful, land-owners and often married to locals. (5) Rather, the Bororos are perceived as new settlers, who usually do not or hardly understand the local language, appear to be violent in countenance, and are further perceived as being rarely reasonable. (6) The itinerant or migrant Bororos are perceived to be dangerous and emotionally erratic. (7) Herderss do not understand the language of the Bororos – who, by origin, are mostly from the neighboring countries.

Narratives by the Research Participants or Respondents The South-West team had met with the head of the herders in the company of his chiefs and followers in Iwo town, and made the following findings: (1) That, the Herderss have been in the State of Osun for a long time and abide by the rules of the land and have no problems with their hosts. (2) That, they always comply with their hosts’ directives to dwell on unused farmlands. (3) That, the herders that mostly graze on the Farmers’ crops were the itinerant Bororos who generally graze across Southern Nigeria. (4) That, some of these itinerant Bororos continue to cause conflict between farmers and the Herders. (5) That, farmers have the tendency to exaggerate the volume and quantum of crops destroyed. (6) That, the farmers often demanded outrageous compensation whenever their crops were destroyed. (7) That, farmers always resolve to call for eviction of the herders, on grounds that the herders settled on the hosts’ lands without proper notification. (8) That, farmers have the tendency to deny the herders and their cattle access to water. (9) That, some of these herders have settled in their present locations for several years.

The Hijab Dispute between the Muslim Community and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) Background to the Hijab Dispute (1) On February 2013, the Muslim Community filed a case in court against Osun state government and Principals seeking to allow the use of hijab in public schools of State of Osun. (2) CAN subsequently filed an injunction to enable it to be joined as a party in the case. (3) The case dragged in court for close to 3 years. (4) By 3 June, 2016, a judgment was made in favor of the Muslim Community. (5) The CAN organised protests against the judgment and instructed Christian students to wear Christian garments/costumes to school. (6) The CAN had later appealed against this judgment in the Court (of Appeal) at Akure, Ondo state. (7) It is important to state here that the Government of the State of Osun did not appeal the judgment. (8) The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) followed up its appeal at the Court of Appeal in Akure, with street agitations and peaceful protests. (9) CAN encouraged Christian students to wear garments/costumes to school. (10) However, those who did were reported to have been suspended by the Schools authorities.

(a) Key Actors Encountered During the Field Research on the Hijab Dispute (1) Key actors encountered during the research on these conflicts were Muslim and Christian representatives. (2) In-depth interviews were also conducted on this issue with representatives of the Security agencies. (3) Media reports on the hijab dispute between the Muslim Community and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) have tended to be presented in legal and religious terms. (4) Our research findings, however, point to some low-level political manipulation of this conflict by various political gladiators in the state. The South-West team’s primary findings showed that, while there were genuine concerns by both groups in the conflict, the conflict can be explained in two opposing ways, as follows:

Osun State Christian Association of Nigeria (OSCAN) (1) First the Christian groups saw the phenomenology of the court ruling on the hijab as a formal encroachment into former Christian Missionary Schools by the Islamic faith.

(2) That the Hijab problem began four years ago, when the state government started the Classification and Merger of Schools program. (3) OSCAN holds that these schools established by Christian missionaries and taken over by the government still belong to them. (4) That the faith, beliefs and heritage of the missionary schools are being eroded by the reclassification process. (5) That, the reclassification process amounts to moves to eradicate and eliminate their Christian mission. (6) That, by so doing, the Government has a hidden agenda to Islamise such schools. (7) That, otherwise, why is the government asking missionary schools to take loan from SUKKUK, an Islamic Bank, which imposes Islamic conditions before such loans are released to recipients? (8) OSCAN views the Judge (Justice Saka Falola) as a fanatical Muslim. (9) According to OSCAN the judgment gave rights to propagate an Islamic mission and agenda by its legalising the hijab. (10) OSCAN believed that the Judge made a biased judgment by instructing students to wear hijab. (11) OSCAN submitted that the initial suit filed by the Muslim Society did not seek for the legalisation of the hijab as contained in the Court ruling. (12) OSCAN filed for a stay of execution at the High Court but later withdrew it because they did not have faith in the Judge. (13) OSCAN representatives also held the view that the hijab represented a form of Islamic Jihad against Christianity, Christian values and all that the Christian missionary schools stood for in the past.Muslim Stand on the Hijab in the State of Osun (1) The Muslim presented a completely contrary view. (2) That, prior to Prince Oyinlola becoming Governor, public school students were not allowed to wear hijab to school. (3) That, in 2004, however, Prince Oyinlola had published guidelines on administration and disciplines in public school – part of which says the use of Hijab is allowed in Muslim public schools but not compulsory and should not be allowed in other schools. (4) The Muslim Community holds that such position was unfair and complained to the government. (5) The then Government of Prince Oyinlola promised to address the matter but failed to do so until Governor Rauf Aregbesola came into government in 2010. (6) Muslim Students Society of Nigeria complained to the government that students were punished for wearing Hijab and wrote a letter in 2012 to the government seeking for approval to allow the use of hijab in all public school

(7) The Government did not respond to the letter. (8) The Muslim Community subsequently directed students to wear hijab to school which was resisted by teachers. (9) Several unsuccessful meetings were held until the Muslim community filed a case in Court in February 2013. (10) The Muslim Community had directed students to wear hijab to school. (11) Several meetings also were held, all to no fruitful result. (12) In February 2013, the Muslim community then filed a case in court against the state Government and school principals. (13) The Legal Counsel to the Muslims had posited that, as a secular Nation, Nigeria recognises that citizens are entitled to their belief and freedom to practice their religion. (14) That, hijab is part of Islamic attire and is stated in the Quran and the Hadith. (15) That Muslims are directed by their Creator to act in particular moral/religious ways and the hijab is one of such injunctions. (16) Their position is that given that these schools are also funded by government, every Muslim student and child has a right to wear the hijab because the hijab is also mandatory for every Muslim faithful. (17) Muslim representatives also tended to argue that the hijab is restricted to only Muslim Faithfuls and does not in any way affect non-Muslims.

Conclusions Salient Issues Brought Out at the FGDs on the Hijab Dispute in the State of Osun (1) The hijab dispute is an under-belly issue and should be handled with great care and sensitivity in order to avoid escalation. (2) The official stand by both Government and the two parties to take and pursue an absolutely legal option on the Hijab dispute do not stand the chance of bringing about a lasting peace in the State of Osun. (3) The pursuant of the legal option should be complemented by encouraging other human-driven options by encouraging round-table dialogue and compromises on the part of the parties in the conflict. (4) Other human security-driven options should also be put in place to help check likelihood of political manipulation and intrigues by political agents, political gladiators, overzealous religious entrepreneurs who may want to use the Hijab dispute to advance political agendas and selfish ends.