

Atrocities Continue in Middle Belt of Nigeria

Kyle Abts – ICON Director

Benue State Governor, Samuel Ortom continues to ask, “How much longer will the killings continue?” He continues to voice his displeasure because, “... very little is being done”. As a leader he appears helpless to stop these atrocities from occurring in his own State.

He has been embolden with hope by President Trump’s words to President Buhari, “[W]e’re deeply concerned by religious violence in Nigeria, including the burning of churches, and the killing and persecution of Christians”. Yet, it is the following statement that has caused a stir in all of Nigeria, “We encourage Nigeria and the federal, state, and local leaders to do everything in their power to immediately secure the affected communities and to protect innocent civilians of all faiths, including Muslims and including Christians”.

Despite the remarks from Trump and Buhari the international community continues to ignore as a common occurrence the conflicts, killings and destruction. Furthermore, the Benue State Governor and his counterpart from Taraba State, Governor Darius Ishaku, are barraged with near daily reports of death and destruction, but with limited support they feel isolated.

Upon the President Buhari’s return to Nigeria, he mobilized the Army Chief of Staff along with other generals and sent troops to the Benue State capital. Yet, both Governors wonder if the operation will be effective and fair with the dealings of the situation, or will there be collusion by the troops.

The Governors have insufficient command due to the configuration of the defense forces (i.e. Army, Military Police and Police), as they are sent by the Federal Government. Whereas these armed forces are to be at the disposal of the State Governor, there are concerns that the troops are following conflicting orders. It will be recalled that the elder statesman, former General T.Y. Danjuma, appealed to Nigerians, “You must rise to protect yourselves from these people; if you depend on the armed forces to protect you, you will all die” (<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/03/herdsmen-attacks-defend-youll-die-t-y-danjuma/>, March 25, 2018).

Compounding the problem is the lack of attention by the media and the desensitization of the public to the persistent problems. How can these atrocities by the Fulani pastoralist herdsmen be given due consideration by the media and legal process in order to stop the violence and persecution?

Governor Ortom wants the not only his government to increase his efforts to end these Fulani attacks, but he is one of many who want the truth of who is behind these attacks exposed. He is trying to deal with the situation by any means possible.

Ortom passed the anti-grazing law, but it may seem ineffective if each flank does not enforce it. He has taken the Miyetti Kaure Breeders (<https://www.channelstv.com/2018/04/30/benue-govt-sues-miyetti-allah-over-killings/>, April 30, 2018) to Benue State High Court accusing them of murder and violence.

Populations in Benue State, as well as Taraba State, who reside in the city, village and, especially, on the farm eagerly await the outcome of the court case, full implementation of the anti-grazing law and the improved commitment of the security forces.



Kyle Abts (ICON) with Governor Samuel Ortom, Benue State