

# **THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE UN FORUM ON MINORITY ISSUES**

## **PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AND ATROCITY CRIMES TARGETED AGAINST MONORITIES 24-26 NOVEMBER 2014**

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I want to start first of all by thanking Almighty God for giving me this opportunity and also appreciate the United Nations Forum on Minority Issues for inviting me.

A **minority** group is referred to as a sociological category within a demographic Area. Rather than a relational "social group", as the term would indicate, the term refers to a category that is differentiated and defined by the social majority, that is, those who hold the majority of positions of social power in a society. (Wikipedia) In short; the haves vs the have not.(my addition)

However in the Encyclopedia Britannica; a minority group is defined as a culturally, ethnically, or racially distinct group that coexists with but is subordinate to a more dominant group. As the term is used in the social sciences, this sub ordinancy is the chief defining characteristic of a minority group. As such, minority status does not necessarily correlate to population. In some cases one or more so-called minority groups may have a population many times the size of the dominating group, as was the case in South Africa under [apartheid](#) (c. 1950–91).

It is therefore safe to say that Women, Children; tribes and even ethnic groups may be regarded as minority groups in terms of social power and the dominance of a few who have used particularly political and therefore economic power to take undue and unfair advantage of minorities.

I have however redefined a Minority group in my own country Nigeria as anyone outside of the ruling Political Party or Government where the winner takes all; whether in allocation of Resources or adequate representation in Governance and the accompanying injustice of exclusion and the impunity which goes with it that leaves us with violence as the usual platform of expressing anger and bitterness against such powers. But the worst is when the violence is being perpetrated by those who hold the majority of political and economic power and use it to oppress or subjugate minorities.

The violence and atrocity crimes targeted against Minorities especially in the middle belt of Nigeria has gone on unabated largely because of a weak and faulty judicial system both at the local and international level that has failed to bring to book perpetrators of crimes against humanity and even genocide thereby encouraging impunity.

In Plateau State where I live thousands of people have lost their lives in religious conflicts for over a decade but no one has been brought to book in spite of the so called panels of enquiry that was set up.<sup>7TH</sup> march 2010 in a village called Dogon na Hauwa; over 500 Women and Children were massacred by Islamic militants; till

date no one has been brought to book. In Kaduna State ; the Southern Kaduna indigenes who are a minority have gone through untold hardship as their people have been killed in the hundreds with no repercussion. This year alone there have been over 10 different attacks on Christian Communities of Sanga Local Govt with over hundreds killed but the state and Federal Government has done nothing .Pastors and Christians have become an endangered specie in Nigeria.

Of course the whole world is aware of Boko Haram abduction of over 200 school girls in Chibok and the killings of young children in schools in Adamawa; Yobe and Taraba States of Nigeria. The list is endless .Boko Haram which means western education is forbidden has raped ;kidnapped; looted and killed thousands in Nigeria and has enforced strict Islamic law in territories conquered.

Women as mothers got together under the platform of WOMEN WITHOUT WALLS INITIATIVE to use our God given roles as mothers to address some of these conflicts especially on the Plateau.

Women Without Walls Initiative is a non governmental all inclusive interfaith women organization formed to “Develop a Non Violent and Inclusive Approach for Conflict Resolution and Transformation in Nigeria through Women who are Natural Agents for Social and National change.” This we have done in the past four years by:

#### 1.ADVOCACIES

We immediately undertook advocacies to all major stakeholders which include Religious ; Traditional ;Youth and Women Leaders; Security Agencies and the State Government where we were not very successful. Our focus though was on four volatile Communities (Two Christian and two Muslim Communities) where we engaged warring factions and foot soldiers who were mostly jobless and school less young men and women.

#### 2.Organizing Peace Rallies

On the 7th March 2010 over 500 women and children were killed by Islamic fundamentalists in Dogon na Hauwa as retaliation of earlier killings of Muslims by locals in Bisichi of Plateau State. The Christian women under my leadership as a pastor led a protest rally ;the Muslim women also responded by leading a protest rally over the killing of moslems in Bisichi and yet the killings never stopped. I decided to reach out to the leader of the Muslim women rally who is also a religious leader which led to the formation of WOMEN WITHOUT WALLS INITIATIVE as we decided to do away with the walls that divide us which are majorly Political but religion is used as a very effective and powerful tool ;ethnicity; socio economic factors; social class etc This was followed up with a Peace Carnival rally jointly undertaken by WOWWI and BRING BACK OUR CHIBOK GIRLS RALLY.

### 3.Developmental Projects

Our engaging the Youths in volatile Communities exposed genuine grievances of under development and unfairness. We contributed our quota to ease these grievances that are drivers of violence by building a borehole in Angwan Rukuba ;Renovating a block of classrooms in Gangare; donating artificial legs to two women bomb victims and tryclcles to the disabled in Dilimi. These projects though small were major entry points and openers of these Communities to us to continue to engage and dialogue with them to eschew violence.

### 4.Mother,s School

In collaboration with SAVE (Sisters Against Violent Extremism also known as Women Without Borders, Vienna) we undertook and also trained local Women and mothers to detect early warning signs of radicalization leading to violent extremism in their children and what to do about that.

### 5. Community Policing

In Collaboration with USIP (United States Institute of Peace) we undertook trainings on WPEV (Women Preventing Extremist Violence) and implemented Community Policing where a better working relationship and collaboration between the Police and Community members was encouraged.

### 6.MEDIATION AND RECONCILIATION

We were part of the efforts and collaborated with HD (Humanitarian Dialogue) to sit down with victims of war most of whom are widows now in the various Communities to let them share their experiences. Most would cry but it was the beginning of healing.

### 7.PRESS CONFERENCE

Tribal and religious women leaders have held press conferences at various times to speak to the populace in their different languages but all saying the same thing; advocating for peace;hoping that will send a strong message.

These are some of our intervention efforts and like they say; It is a drop in the ocean but the struggle continues.....

Above all, We appeal to the United Nations to intervene in preventing and addressing some of these atrocity crimes against minorities and violations of Human Rights in Nigeria.

I would like to end with a scripture from the Bible in Rev 7:9 that says “After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count; from every nation, tribe, people and language standing before the Throne and the Lamb.....

If people are not called to give account of their actions ;some day we all ; from every tribe ; nation ; people and language will stand before the Creator of heaven and earth and we will give account for all our actions while here on earth. May our actions or inactions not speak against us on that day.

Thank you very much and God bless us all.