

COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF STAKEHOLDERS' MEETING ON THE INSECURITY IN THE NORTH- EAST, NIGERIA ORGANISED BY THE CENTRE FOR DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT AT ABUJA ON WEDNESDAY 26TH FEBRUARY, 2014.

Introduction:

The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) held a stakeholders' meeting to review the federal government counter-insurgency strategies, to identify challenges and proffer practical strategies for curbing the insecurity in the North East region of Nigeria. Participants at the meeting were drawn from security experts, civil society and academia.

The continued killing of Nigerians in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states by an Islamic sect referred to as Boko Haram, demands a critical review of the national strategy on counter-insurgency. Media reports in the last three weeks shows that members of the sect have killed over 300 Nigerians with security personnel inclusive. Emerging indications shows that it has taken more virulent dimension despite the counter-insurgency strategy of the Nigeria government since 2011. Amnesty was also introduced by the federal governments in 2013 as a strategy to ending the insurgency, which has not taken off.

In the light of the foregoing, it is imperative to ask thus: to what extent has the counter-insurgency strategy of the Nigerian state in the North East region been effective? Given that the insurgency portends a great danger to the corporate existence of the Nigerian state and its citizens, the need for a comprehensive review of the counter insurgency strategy has become an imperative.

It is therefore within this context that the objectives of the stakeholder meeting convened by the Centre for Democracy and Development included:

- To provide a forum for brainstorming on the state of insecurity in the North East region of the country; and
- To review the counter-insurgency strategies of the Nigerian government with a view to providing practical approach to ending the national calamity.

Key Observations:

After extensive deliberation, the following observations were made.

- There is a near absence of community engagement by government in fighting insurgency in the North East region;
- The Nigerian government is yet to undertake a humanitarian assessment mission on the situation in the north east region.

- The high rate of poverty and the *almajiri situation* has contributed significantly in the rising spate of violence and insecurity in the North East region in view of the fact that these children can easily be recruited by insurgents;
- There is no coherent and concrete synergy among CSOs working on insurgency related issues in the North East region;
- There is contradiction among the respective security personal in terms of who takes the lead and credit in the fight against insurgency;
- The high level of proliferation of places of worship without effective government regulation has contributed to the dissemination of hate messages that has over the years fueled intolerance, violence and insurgency;
- The capacity deficit associated with the Nigerian Police has led to the overstretching of the military that are currently involved in internal security management in thirty two out of the thirty six states of the federation;
- The Ministry of Interior, Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) and other key conflict resolution institutions do not have the capacity to contribute significantly to conflict resolution; and
- The Rules of Engagement (RoE) being adopted by the government is opaque and seems not to be yielding the required result.

Recommendations

- Governments at all levels should engage communities in the fight against insurgency since these insurgents are drawn from these communities;
- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) should undertake a humanitarian assessment mission on the situation in the North East region;
- Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) should work closely among themselves with a view to setting up working groups on the basis of key thematic areas that will be useful for planning;
- The Federal Government should put in a place a marshal plan for the North East as a basis for alleviating poverty;
- Nigerian government should explore the international linkages using ECOWAS and African Union conflict resolution mechanisms as well as engaging neighboring countries as alternative means of ending insurgency
- The Federal Government should harmonize the national security infrastructure in a way that would provide for the strengthening and encouraging of synergy among security agencies;
- Governments at all levels should strengthen their de-radicalization strategy in a way that reflects existing legal framework of licensing on preaching;

- The capacity of the police should be improved in order to meet the contemporary challenges posed by insurgency, in a that will also reduce the burden of an overstretched military;
- The capacity of the ministry of interior, Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) and other key conflict resolution institution should be built to address issues related to internal security and conflict resolution respectively; and
- The Rule of Engagement on the conduct of the military in the management of internal security or conflict situations should be reviewed in accordance with the principles of humanitarian law.

Signed

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