

NIGERIA: UNFOLDING GENOCIDE?

An Inquiry by the UK All-Party Parliamentary Group for
International Freedom of Religion or Belief

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FOREWORD

Over my ten years as a Member of the UK Parliament, the COVID-19 crisis has surely been one of the most difficult and surreal challenges I have experienced. Constituents have told me of their physical suffering, of job losses, and the pain of not being able to visit their loved ones. This widespread and tremendous difficulty is a somewhat novel experience for many of us in the UK but for countless Christians living in Nigeria, extreme challenges are nothing new.

Shockingly for a Commonwealth country, Nigeria ranks twelfth on Open Doors World Watch List 2020 of the countries in which Christians are most persecuted. By comparison, Syria ranks eleventh and Saudi Arabia ranks thirteenth, with Iraq fifteenth and Egypt sixteenth. Nigeria is currently just one rank below ‘extreme’. Similarly, Sri Lanka ranks thirtieth, despite bombings of worshipping Christians on Easter Sunday 2019 which killed 259 and injured over 500.

One of the main drivers of this persecution in Nigeria is the militant group Boko Haram who frequently abduct and kill those who refuse to conform to their extremist brand of Islam. On 22 December 2019, in Borno state, Boko Haram jihadists attacked two passenger buses and released the Muslim passengers. They then held back the Christians, separating the men and women. A pastor from Deeper Life Bible Church and two other men were killed on the spot, while the pastor’s relative and two humanitarian workers were abducted. On 26 December 2019, members of the Islamic State West Africa Province (a Daesh affiliate) released a horrific video, which showed the execution of ten Christian prisoners and one Muslim - presumably to coincide with Christmas celebrations. Then on Christmas Eve, another horrific report came from a Christian village near the town of Chibok in Borno. Numerous Boko Haram jihadists driving trucks and motorcycles stormed into Kwarangulum, firing at residents, looting all they could and burning their homes.

The saddest account of all emerged on Boxing Day 2019, when a Christian bride-to-be and her entire bridal party were massacred while traveling in Adamawa state to prepare for her New Years’ Eve wedding. Father Francis Arinse, a diocesan communications director of Nigeria’s Catholic Church, reported that Martha Bulus, her sister Zainab and five others were ritually slaughtered. He told Catholic News Service that “they were beheaded by suspected Boko Haram insurgents at Gwoza on their way to her country home”. As Nigerian Government Ministers have publicly and rightly admitted, Christians are being ruthlessly targeted, specifically because of their Faith. Undoubtedly though, peaceable Muslims, through collateral violence, can also become victims of this cruel Islamist religious ideology. It is a destructive and divisive ideology which readily mutates into crimes against humanity and can pave the way for genocide. We must not hesitate in saying so.

Unfortunately, Boko Haram are not the only threat that Nigerian Christians face. Attacks by armed groups of Fulani herdsmen have resulted in the killing, maiming, dispossession and eviction of thousands of Christians. It is difficult for us in the West to sometimes even imagine this kind of suffering, so it is important that we recognise the stories of survivors. For example, describing an attack in Ngar village, a survivor called Margaret said: “[My sister] was raped and her wrists cut off before she was shot through the heart. They took my brother, his wife and all their six children, tied and slaughtered them like animals.” Similarly, Veronica, from Dogon Noma, said: “Another man attacked me with a machete twice, once to the neck and once to my hand. I was so confused. I lost consciousness. When I woke up, I saw my daughter on ground – she was dead – with my chopped finger in her mouth.” Antonia Aje, from Karamai, said: “I saw my brother-in-law’s body on the ground, hacked to pieces by a machete... Our home is destroyed. The hospital was burnt. They tried to burn the roof of the church by piling up the chairs, like a bonfire.”

As Parliamentarians, I believe it is our responsibility to speak out on behalf of all the survivors and victims of violence, and all those who are suffering but who cannot speak out for themselves. One such survivor is Leah Sharibu, whose mother I was honoured to meet on a recent London visit.



Jim Shannon MP with Rebecca Sharibu and her companion, Gloria, as well as Fiona Bruce MP, Baroness Cox and Lord Alton of Liverpool, to discuss the failure of the Nigerian authorities to free Rebecca's daughter Leah.

Two years ago, 14-year old Leah Sharibu was abducted by Islamist extremists from her school in Dapchi, north-east Nigeria. There are reports that she was enslaved, raped and impregnated, giving birth to a child, and that she has been denied her freedom for refusing to convert to Islam as a precondition for her release. Leah represents the worldwide struggle both for freedom of religion and belief and the unacceptable violence directed at women and girls. There are thousands of Leahs held all over Nigeria, and across the world. This report is dedicated to her and the millions of others who suffer so unspeakably. Its purpose is to explore the drivers of conflict and to highlight the seriousness of the situation and the level of injustice that Nigerian Christians face. Among all the injustices for the UK to help correct in the near future, the widespread and growing persecution of Christians should be top of the list. These Christians, and other persecuted minorities, must be our priority in the aftermath of a pandemic that may devastate communities already threatened with extinction. Thus, as the UK faces the challenge of lockdown and mass quarantine for the first time in living memory, I ask you to please spare a thought for those Christians who face not only a pandemic but also threats of violence and persecution that we can't imagine. I urge the UK and Nigerian Governments to do all that they can to bring an end to this violence and bring its perpetrators to justice.

Jim Shannon MP
Chair, All Party-Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief

INTRODUCTION

The UK All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief (APPG) is a group of over 100 British Parliamentarians from different political parties and from both Houses of Parliament. It exists to promote Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that "*Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.*"¹

APPG members have been alarmed by the dramatic and escalating inter-communal violence in Nigeria characterised as the farmer-herder conflict. This violence has manifested along religious lines, as the herders are predominantly ethnic Fulani Muslims and the farmers are predominantly Christians. The violence has claimed the lives of thousands of people and displaced hundreds of thousands more. It has caused untold human and economic devastation and heightened existing ethno-religious tensions.

There has been significant debate about what factors are driving and exacerbating this crisis. Therefore, the APPG launched a parliamentary inquiry to help develop a nuanced understanding of the drivers of violence and increase parliamentary, public and Governmental interest in the issue. The APPG inquiry heard testimony from Nigerian and international experts during several oral evidence sessions held in the UK Houses of Parliament between 2018 and 2019. The APPG also held several smaller meetings and received written submissions.

Individuals and organisations who gave oral or written evidence include: Mercy Corps, The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Forum on Farmer and Herder Relations in Nigeria, the UK Government, The Nigerian National Christian Elders Forum, Open Doors UK and Ireland, the former Deputy Governor of the Nigerian Central Bank, Search for Common Ground, the Institute for Economics and Peace, CSW, Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust, the Muslim Public Affairs Centre Nigeria and many others. Their evidence was bolstered with data from news articles and reports on the issue by think tanks, academics and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as well as information from a UK Government-initiated conference on the issue at Wilton Park in February 2020. The APPG then collated and assessed this evidence to try to understand what factors are causing or exacerbating the conflict and to determine what solutions to recommend to the Nigerian Government and the international community.

APPG members do not claim to be experts on Nigeria or to have all the answers to this crisis. The group recognises that Nigeria is a vast, exceedingly complex country and it would be a mistake to artificially simplify the nature of the conflict or the society. We also recognise that Nigeria is a sovereign and capable state dealing with extraordinary pressures which British parliamentarians can scarcely imagine. Thus, the purpose of the APPG inquiry, and this report, is not to lecture or criticise but to offer our support. We hope that when it comes to such a highly polarising issue, having an impartial view on the conflict, from a group whose only desire is to see freedom of religion or belief protected, may help to create a shared understanding of the violence and accelerate efforts to reduce it. The APPG is extremely grateful to all those who shared their time and expertise with members to help develop this understanding and to help those affected by this terrible violence.

¹ UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> [accessed on 20 February 2020].

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Conflict Background

For centuries, Fulani herders have lived in relative harmony with settled farming communities. These two groups have benefited historically from symbiotic partnerships to keep cropland fertile and cattle well nourished. Disputes would occasionally arise, as herders moved their cattle seasonally onto farming lands in search of water and grazing areas, but leaders would generally resolve them peacefully through established arbitration mechanisms which compensated losses and shared resources.² Unfortunately, this relationship has deteriorated rapidly resulting in enormous violence.

The exact death toll is unknown. However, thousands of civilians are thought to have been killed in attacks led by Fulani herders and periodic retaliatory violence. Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust report that over 1,000 Christians were killed between January-November 2019, “in addition to the estimated 6,000+ deaths since 2015.”³ Amnesty International estimate that between January 2016 and October 2018 “at least 3,641 people may have been killed, 406 injured [and] 5,000 houses burnt down.”⁴ Local groups, such as the Christian Association of Nigeria, report higher figures: between January and June 2018, over 6,000 people were killed by Fulani herders.⁵

International Crisis Group (ICG) estimate that over 300,000 people have been displaced⁶ and that the violence has claimed the lives of six times more people than the conflict with Boko Haram.⁷ Its geographical footprint is also larger, with conflict manifesting in more States.⁸ According to Search for Common Ground (SfcG), “between 1 January 2019 and 1 January 2020, inter-communal violence represented the most severe threat to civilian lives in Nigeria.”⁹ Mercy Corps report that the violence is costing the Nigerian economy £10.5 billion per year.¹⁰

Some of the worst-affected areas include Benue, Plateau, Taraba, Adamawa, Kaduna, Kwara, Borno and Zamfara. On 4 July 2018, the Nigerian House of Representatives declared killings in predominantly-Christian villages in Plateau State to be a genocide and called on the Federal Government to immediately establish orphanages in areas affected by violence.¹¹ On 26 February 2019, the Economic Community of West African States Court of Justice ordered an investigation into mass killings and destruction of properties committed by Fulani herders against the Agatu Community

² Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, ‘Criminality & Reprisal Attacks in Nigeria’s Middle Belt’ (Search for Common Ground, 2017). Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

³ Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust, ‘Your Land or Your Blood: The Escalating Persecution of Christians in Northern and Central Nigeria’ (November 2019).

⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁵ Press Release by church denominational heads in Plateau and Christian Association of Nigeria in Plateau State, 29 June 2018, available at <https://www.csv.org.uk/2018/06/29/news/4017/article.htm>

⁶ International Crisis Group, ‘Stopping Nigeria’s Spiraling Farmer-Herder Violence. Africa Report No. 262’ (ICG, 2018). Available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>.

⁷ Ibid. Executive Summary.

⁸ Emmanuel Ogebe, ‘Rivers of Blood on The River Benue Parts 1& 2: Consolidated Human Rights Fact-Finding Report on Killings by Herdsmen in Nigeria’s Benue State In 2018’ (2018).

⁹ Katie Smith, Analysis of ACLED Data, Search for Common Ground, Email Conversation with APPG Director, 24 Feb 2020.

¹⁰ Andras Besztercze, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Mercy Corps, 22 November 2018.

¹¹ James Emejo and Senator Iroegbu, House Designates Plateau Killings as Genocide, This Day Live News (2018). Available at: <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2018/07/04/house-designates-plateau-killings-as-genocide/>

in Benue State in 2016, stating that the Government is “obliged to protect the human rights of its citizens” and to identify and prosecute the perpetrators and redress the victims.¹²

Key Factors Contributing to the Conflict

The APPG examined multiple drivers of conflict, including resource competition, religious sectarianism, poor land management by the Nigerian Government, population growth, climate change and insecurity.

Resource competition

Rapid population growth, climate change and desertification have decreased the water available for land and grazing and put pressure on resources. The United Nations estimates that “roughly 80% of the Sahel’s farmland is degraded [and] the land available to pastoralists is shrinking... Declining grain and food production is forcing pastoralists into a desperate search for fertile pasture.”¹³ As herders travel further distances in search of water and land for grazing, they come into conflict with local farmers, who accuse the herders of encroaching onto their land and damaging their crops. The increased conflict has strained the capacity of traditional leaders to reduce tensions and resolve conflict amicably. This has contributed to the breakdown of historical dispute settlement mechanisms and conflict turning to violence.

Extremist ideology

The escalation of violence must also be seen in the context of the growing power and influence of Islamist extremism across the Sahel. Multiple groups, such as the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), a splinter of Boko Haram and an affiliate of the weakened Daesh caliphate in Iraq and Syria, continue to extend their networks in Nigeria, Mali, Niger, Cameroon, Chad and Burkina Faso. While not necessarily sharing an identical vision, some Fulani herders have adopted a comparable strategy to Boko Haram and ISWAP and demonstrated a clear intent to target Christians and symbols of Christian identity such as churches.

The APPG received numerous reports that Christian pastors and community heads are specifically targeted. During many of the attacks, herders are reported by survivors to have shouted ‘Allah u Akbar’, ‘destroy the infidels’ and ‘wipe out the infidels.’ Hundreds of churches have been destroyed, including over 500 churches in Benue State. As the Bishop of Truro concluded in his report for the UK’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office, “the religious dimension is a significantly exacerbating factor” in

¹² The Economic Community of West African States Court of Justice, *Rev. Fr. Solomon Mfa et al. v Federal Republic of Nigeria et al.*, Judgment No. ECW/CCJ/JUD/06/19, 26 February 2019, 29. Available at: http://prod.courtecowas.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/JUD_ECW_CCJ_JUD_06_19.pdf.

¹³ Robert Muggah and José Luengo Cabrera, ‘The Sahel is Engulfed by Violence. Climate Change, Food Insecurity and Extremists are Largely to Blame,’ World Economic Forum, 23 Jan 2019. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/all-the-warning-signs-are-showing-in-the-sahel-we-must-act-now/>.

clashes between farmers and herders and “targeted violence against Christian communities in the context of worship suggests that religion plays a key part.”¹⁴

Examples of atrocities

Jim Shannon MP, Chair of the APPG, summed up the group’s concerns when he said: “Attacks by armed groups of Muslim Fulani herdsmen have resulted in the killing, maiming, dispossession and eviction of thousands of Christians.”¹⁵

- Four Christian farming villages were attacked by herders in the Ropp district, Plateau State. The attack killed 21 people. One survivor said: “They were trained terrorists with guns. They killed those who couldn’t run – the aged, the children and the blind. A pastor was their first casualty. They surrounded him. They killed him and then they rejoiced, shouting ‘Allah u Akbar’ and ‘we have got a hero’.”¹⁶
- Deaconess Susan Essam described a similar attack in Jos: “On the outskirts of the city, under the foothills, are two houses close together, where Sarah [not her real name], her husband and children, her mother, uncle and other family members lived. The Fulani had for a long time been coming around that area to graze their cattle and it was alleged that a Fulani boy was killed around there, but no evidence of that has been seen. On the late evening of Thursday 27 September, they came and killed nine people in one house and three in the other, including a pregnant woman. They shot Sarah’s husband and children and so she begged them to kill her too, but they refused, saying that they wanted her to cry and bear the pain.”¹⁷
- Describing an attack in Ngar village, a survivor called Margaret said: “I called my sister’s cellphone, Naomi is her name, she lived in the village not too far from me and we had been communicating during the attack, but this time a Fulani answered the phone. We later saw that she was raped and her wrists cut off before she was shot through the heart. They took my brother, his wife and all their six children, tied and slaughtered them like animals. 18 people were killed in the house that day, the rest were all burnt alive.”¹⁸
- Lydia, from Ningon village in Gashing District, said: “They capture cows and surround our villages. They use pick-ups, guns and loot and burn our homes. Before the attack, the Fulani told us: ‘There’s no point in sowing because we won’t have a harvest to reap’. They were hacking and killing people, making sure that those that were shot were finished off. They wore

¹⁴ Rt. Rev. Philip Mounstephen Bishop of Truro, ‘Bishop of Truro’s Independent Review for the Foreign Secretary of the FCO Support for Persecution Christians’ (2019). Available at: <https://christianpersecutionreview.org.uk/storage/2019/07/final-report-and-recommendations.pdf>.

¹⁵ Jim Shannon MP, Covid-19’s worst victims will be the persecute Christians on Africa, The Sunday Telegraph, 12 April 2020. Available at: <https://appgfreedomofreligionorbelief.org/covid-19s-worst-victims-will-be-the-persecuted-christians-of-africa/>

¹⁶ Baroness Cox, ‘An Insurgency of Terror: The Crisis Facing Christians in Nigeria. Visit Report (November 2016).

¹⁷ Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust, ‘Hidden Atrocities: The escalating persecution and displacement of Christians in northern and central Nigeria’ (November 2018).

¹⁸ Ibid.

black and red – red to conceal blood splashes on their clothes as they butchered their victims.”¹⁹

- Antonia Aje, from Karamai, said: “We hid in the bushes until the gunshots subsided. When we returned, I saw my brother-in-law’s body on the ground, hacked to pieces by a machete. My mother-in-law is so traumatised that she cannot live alone... Our home is destroyed. The hospital was burnt. They tried to burn the roof of the church by piling up the chairs, like a bonfire.”²⁰
- Veronica, from Dogon Noma, said: “We tried to run. But we were surrounded. It was an ambush. They shot me. I raised my arm, pleading for mercy. My six-year-old daughter did the same. But the man behind her struck her with a machete and pulled her to ground. Another man attacked me with a machete twice, once to the neck and once to my hand. I was so confused. I lost consciousness. When I woke up, I saw my daughter on ground – she was dead – with my chopped finger in her mouth.”²¹
- During the writing of this report, the killings have continued. As recently as 2 April 2020, more than 300 Fulani herders reportedly attacked the Christian village of Hukke, near Jos, killing seven and setting fire to at least 23 homes.²² One survivor said: “I saw the Fulani as they came towards me, they started shooting, I fell and they passed over me into my house and killed my two sons, they then went straight to the pastors house and shot and killed him, they set some houses on fire and left.”²³ On 7 April, Fulani herders attacked Nsah village in Kwall district of Plateau State, killing four people, including Pastor Matthew Tagwi. One survivor said: “This issue of COVID-19, we don’t know anything about it, but our problem is Fulani who are killing us.”²⁴ On 14 April, Fulani herders killed nine people including a pregnant woman and her three-year old child in Hura near Maiyanga village, Plateau State. A survivor said: “Fulanis came and almost surrounded the village shouting in their language; some shouting ‘Allah u Akbar, come out, come out!’ amidst gunshots.”²⁵ The traditional ruler of the area, Ronku Aka, condemned the attack and said: “the incessant killing is more dangerous than Coroner [sic] Virus.”²⁶ On 19 April, Fulani herders attacked Ntiriku village in Kamuru, in Kauri Local Government council of Kaduna State, killing three women and burning 63 homes. Another man died during the attack, suspected to be as a result of cardiac arrest. The village head, Dauda Rogo, said: “Why did the Fulani leave the Muslims who are farmers and attack

¹⁹ Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust, ‘Hidden Atrocities: The escalating persecution and displacement of Christians in northern and central Nigeria’ (November 2018).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Barnabas Fund, ‘Seven Nigerian Christians burnt to death among 19 dead as Fulani militants attack during Covid-19 (coronavirus) lockdown’, 14 April 2020

²³ Evidence submitted by Canon Hassan John, coordinator of the Mai Adiko Peace and Reconciliation Project, who visited Hukke after the attack.

²⁴ Lawrence Zongo, ‘The government is silent’: Muslim tribesmen kill Christian pastor and burn down school in Nigerian village’, Zenger, 9 April 2020. Available at: <https://zenger.news/2020/04/09/the-government-is-silent-muslim-tribesmen-kill-christian-pastor-and-burn-down-school-in-nigerian-village/>.

²⁵ Barnabas Fund, ‘Five-year old murdered, snatched from pregnant mother’, 17 April 2020

²⁶ Munashka Online, Bassa Killings: 9 feared Dead Despite Lockdown Amidst Covid19 Pandemic In Plateau State, 15 April 2020. Available at: <https://munashakonline.com/bassa-killings-9-feared-dead-despite-lockdown-amidst-covid19-pandemic-in-plateau-state/>

only Christians if this is not a religious issue? This is more than grazing land or farmers and herders' fight over land.”²⁷

Attacks by Fulani herders have led to periodic retaliatory violence, as farming communities conclude that they can no longer rely on the authorities for protection or justice. Some local vigilantes, led by youths, take matters into their own hands by going on violent reprisals against Muslims who they believe are backed by the Government. Such retaliatory violence cannot be condoned. However, their reprisals must be seen in the context of an urgent need for the authorities to enforce the rule of law to protect all its citizens.

As the Co-Chair of the APPG Baroness Cox has argued: “While the underlying causes of violence are complex, the asymmetry and escalation of attacks by well-armed Fulani militia upon these predominately Christian communities are stark and must be acknowledged. Such atrocities cannot be attributed just to desertification, climate change or competition for resources, as [the UK] Government have claimed.”²⁸ Vice Chair of the APPG Fiona Bruce MP said: “Targeted attacks against churches and heightening religious tensions indicate that religious identity plays a role in the farmer-herder conflict”²⁹ and Vice Chair Lord Alton of Liverpool said: “Some local observers have gone so far as to describe the rising attacks as a campaign of ethno-religious cleansing. Armed with sophisticated weaponry, including AK47s and, in at least one case, a rocket launcher and rocket-propelled grenades, the Fulani militia have murdered more men, women and children in 2015, 2016 and 2017 than even Boko Haram, destroying, overrunning and seizing property and land, and displacing tens of thousands of people. This is organised and systematic.”³⁰

The influence of politics

Political actors working to further their own interests have deepened religious divisions.³¹ Politicians in Nigeria often blame challenges on other identity groups and then present themselves as the only ones *their* group can trust to protect them and to fight for their resources.³² This is exacerbated by indigene/settler tensions, where certain groups are legally considered “indigenes” of an area and are afforded certain rights over groups considered “settlers”. As these groups often fall along religious lines, this can lead to political and violent conflict between religious groups over rights and resources. The influence of politics on farmer-herder violence may help to explain why there was an escalation in conflict in Nigeria in 2018 in the run up to the national elections.³³

²⁷ Evidence submitted by Canon Hassan John, coordinator of the Mai Adiko Peace and Reconciliation Project, who visited Ntiriku after the attack.

²⁸ House of Lords Hansard, 7 January 2020, col.123

²⁹ House of Commons Hansard, 6 February 2020, cols.530-531

³⁰ House of Lords Hansard, 28 June 2018, cols.284-285

³¹ Dr Saleh Momale, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Forum on Farmer and Herder Relations in Nigeria, 1 April 2019.

³² Fostering Social Cohesion in Nigeria, Conference, Wilton Park, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 26-28 February 2020.

³³ Dr Saleh Momale, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Forum on Farmer and Herder Relations in Nigeria, 1 Apr 2019.

Nigerian Government response

Another of the main drivers of the escalating violence is the Nigerian Government's inability to provide security or justice to farmer or herder communities. Failure to prosecute past perpetrators of violence, or heed early warnings of impending attacks has facilitated the rise of armed militia which often form along ethno-religious lines to protect community interests. According to SfCG, 36 different political, ethnic, or communal "militias" were involved in inter-communal violence in 2019 resulting in the loss of over 1,000 civilian lives.³⁴

The inability of the Nigerian Federal and State Governments to protect Christian farmers, and the lack of political will to respond adequately to warnings or to bring perpetrators of violence to justice, has fostered feelings of victimisation and persecution. The APPG agrees with Amnesty International's conclusion that failure to protect communities, as well as cases of direct military harassment or violence, combined with an unwillingness to instigate legitimate investigations into allegations of wrong doing, "demonstrate, at least, wilful negligence; at worst, complicity"³⁵ on the behalf of some in the Nigerian security forces.

Criminality

Criminality also plays an important contributory role in the violence. Rural communities across Northern and Central Nigeria, including Fulani herders and farming communities of diverse ethnic and religious identities, have lost their livelihoods to village raids, cattle rustling and kidnapping."³⁶ SfCG report that this growth of criminality has coincided with the skyrocketing price of cattle. Moreover, 'conflict entrepreneurs' are taking advantage of the Boko Haram violence in the Northeast, and general insecurity in Nigeria, to engage in widespread 'rural banditry.' These gangs of criminals instigate fear and violence to raid communities for livestock and plunder. This violent criminal behaviour can also cause further violent criminal behaviour, as people displaced from their communities and robbed of their livelihoods are more likely to become criminals themselves in order to survive.

Firearms

Evidence received by the APPG suggests that the ready availability and low price of firearms in Nigeria has played a role in escalating violence. The ongoing instability in Libya has led to a huge increase in the number of firearms flowing into the country.³⁷ Combined with the huge supply of weapons left over from civil wars in Liberia, Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone, as well as the domestic Nigerian arms manufacturing industry³⁸, this means that firearms are readily available in Nigeria and have fallen dramatically in price in recent years.³⁹ The high price of cattle and the low price and ready availability

³⁴ Katie Smith, Analysis of ACLED Data, Search for Common Ground, Email Conversation with APPG Director, 24 Feb 2020.

³⁵ Amnesty International, 'Harvest of Death Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders In Nigeria' (Amnesty International, 2018) 50. Available at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF>.

³⁶ Dr Saleh Momale, 'Violence in Nigeria's Middle Belt Region on Nigeria: Briefing Notes' 2, Forum on Farmer and Herder Relations in Nigeria, 1 April 2019.

³⁷ The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Church of England, 3 December 2018.

³⁸ Ambassador John Campbell, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Council on Foreign Relations, 13 May 2019.

³⁹ The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Church of England, 3 December 2018.

of guns has led to herders in particular being well armed with sophisticated weaponry, which they sometimes acquire through black market channels or through wealthy cattle owners who arm them to protect their herds.

Misinformation

Another factor that is widely considered to have exacerbated the conflict between farmers and herders is the spread of ‘fake news’ via social media. Such mis- or false information often incorrectly attributes stories, and even footage, of violence from other African countries, to farmers or herders in Nigeria.⁴⁰ This has led to heightened tensions, violent reprisals and an environment in which peace building is increasingly difficult.

Reporting on this conflict is difficult for media outlets, as they may not have the resources or access to first-hand information to engage comprehensively with the issues. Among those who are able or willing to report on the violence, there is a tendency to focus only on the most severe cases and to overlook widespread smaller-scale attacks. This makes it even harder for commentators to decipher truths from untruths or to unpack the scale and nature of conflict.

Commentators must not shy away from describing conflicts as motivated by religion or ideology when that is the case. Given the sensitivities involved, there is a pressing need for local and international actors to weigh carefully the multiple drivers of conflict, highlighting cases of atrocities whilst being careful not to exacerbate tensions by promulgating a biased narrative.

⁴⁰ Oliver Owen, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, University of Oxford, 22 November 2018.

CONFLICT BACKGROUND

1. Nigeria is Africa's most populous country with a population of over 200 million people⁴¹. It is a major political and economic force in both West Africa and the continent.⁴² The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria recognises a wide range of fundamental rights including the right to life, right to human dignity and right to freedom of conscience and religion.⁴³ Nigeria is also committed to protect these rights through international instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.⁴⁴
2. Nigeria is a deeply complex society divided along many tribal, political, linguistic, ethnic, geographical and class lines.⁴⁵ There are also significant tensions between the country's two major religious groups: Islam and Christianity, which represent 53.5% and 45.9% of the population respectively (although these figures are often contested in Nigeria).⁴⁶ The country is geographically divided. The population of the Northern States is majority Muslim and the population of the Southern States is majority Christian.⁴⁷
3. The escalating inter-communal violence across the country's Middle Belt involves predominantly Muslim, ethnic Fulani nomadic herders and predominantly Christian, settled farming communities. This report uses the terms farmer and herder to denote these groups for ease of understanding, but recognises that this classification is an oversimplification, that not all farmers are Christian, much as not all herders are Muslim, and that these groups are internally very diverse.
4. According to Search for Common Ground (SfCG): "The Fulani are the primary pastoralist group in Africa and have roots in West Africa as far back as 900 A.D. The largest Fulani populations reside in Nigeria, where they make up a considerable portion of the population, with over 18 million people and 270 clans. For centuries, Fulani herders have lived in relative harmony with settled farming communities. These two groups have historically benefited from symbiotic partnerships to keep cropland fertile and cattle well nourished. Herders seasonally migrated their cattle in search of lush grass, available water sources, and profitable markets for their cattle, often near villages and farms. In turn, the cattle provided critical dung fertilizer that

⁴¹ Central Intelligence Agency, 'The World Factbook: Nigeria'. Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html>. [accessed on 7 February 2020].

⁴² Open Doors UK and Ireland, 'Policy Brief – Nigeria: Addressing the Violence against Christian communities' (Open Doors, 2020).

⁴³ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999. Available at: <http://www.nigerialaw.org/ConstitutionOfTheFederalRepublicOfNigeria.htm>.

⁴⁴ UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Available at: https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-4&chapter=4&clang=_en.

⁴⁵ Tolu Ogunlesi, 'Nigeria's Internal Struggles' New York Times, 23 March 2015. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/24/opinion/nigerias-internal-struggles.html?_r=0.

⁴⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, 'The World Factbook: Nigeria.' Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html>. [accessed on 7 February 2020].

⁴⁷ Tenzin Doorje *et al.*, '2018 Annual Report' (USCIRF, 2019). Available at: https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Tier1_NIGERIA_2019.pdf.

nourished the soil for crop production, leading to high yields. Farmers and herders both benefitted in the exchange of grain for dairy and crop residue for manure.”⁴⁸

5. Despite this symbiotic relationship, land disputes would often arise.⁴⁹ Leaders of the competing groups would generally resolve these disputes peacefully through established arbitration mechanisms, which compensated losses and shared resources.⁵⁰ In their 2018 report on the issue, Amnesty International interviewed people from both herder and farming communities who corroborated this view of farmer-herder relations. They spoke about the “harmonious relationship” they had enjoyed in the past and how conflicts had generally been resolved amicably.⁵¹
6. Unfortunately, this relationship has deteriorated rapidly resulting in widespread violence. Amnesty International reported that they “documented 312 incidents of attacks and reprisal attacks in 22 states and Abuja between January 2016 and October 2018. As a result of these attacks, Amnesty International estimates that at least 3,641 people may have been killed, 406 injured, 5,000 houses burnt down, and 182,530 people displaced.”⁵² International Crisis Group (ICG) estimates that over 300,000 people have been displaced.⁵³
7. According to ICG: “The conflict has evolved from spontaneous reactions to provocations and now to deadlier planned attacks.”⁵⁴ Despite the scale of the violence, the conflict is much less well known internationally than the Boko Haram insurgency. This is the case even though the violence has claimed the lives of six times more people than the conflict with Boko Haram⁵⁵ and its geographical footprint is larger, with conflict manifesting in more States.⁵⁶ According to data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, which was analysed by SfCG, “between 1 January 2019 and 1 January 2020, inter-communal violence represented the most severe threat to civilian lives in Nigeria. 30 of Nigeria’s 36 states (83%) and FCT (Federal Capital Territory) experienced fatal inter-communal attacks in 2019.”⁵⁷
8. Violence involving farmers and herders has had many other devastating impacts. Mercy Corps presented to the APPG Inquiry the findings of their 2015 study which found that the violence characterised as the farmer-herder conflict is costing the Nigerian economy \$10.5 billion per year. The study found that affected states have lost up to 47% in tax revenue and that, in 2018,

⁴⁸ Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, ‘Criminality & Reprisal Attacks in Nigeria’s Middle Belt’ (Search for Common Ground, 2017) 8. Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

⁴⁹ Muslim Public Affairs Centre Nigeria, Written Submission to APPG FORB Inquiry, June 2019.

⁵⁰ Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, ‘Criminality & Reprisal Attacks in Nigeria’s Middle Belt’ (Search for Common Ground, 2017). Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

⁵¹ Amnesty International, ‘Harvest of Death Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders In Nigeria’ (Amnesty International, 2018) 11. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF>.

⁵² Ibid., 16.

⁵³ International Crisis Group, ‘Stopping Nigeria’s Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence. Africa Report No. 262’ (ICG, 2018). Available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Ibid., Principal Findings.

⁵⁵ Ibid., Executive Summary.

⁵⁶ Emmanuel Ogebe, ‘Rivers of Blood on The River Benue Parts 1& 2: Consolidated Human Rights Fact-Finding Report on Killings by Herdsmen in Nigeria’s Benue State In 2018’ (2018).

⁵⁷ Katie Smith, Analysis of ACLED Data, Search for Common Ground, Email Conversation with APPG Director, 24 Feb 2020.

Benue, Nasarawa and Taraba states', food production decreased by 33-66%. The study also found that if conflict were prevented, households would see revenues increase by up to 200%.⁵⁸

9. Thus, the violence has exacerbated poverty and food shortages. Survivors of violence have also had to grapple with many other issues such as loss of family members, homes and livelihoods, as well as life-changing and disabling injuries and displacement, often with no adequate provision of humanitarian support for Internally Displaced People (IDPs). They also suffer vulnerability to human trafficking, lack of access to education and health services, and the trauma and other mental health challenges often associated with surviving extreme violence.⁵⁹ The conflict has also led to disenfranchisement for those who can no longer vote in their local areas⁶⁰ and has exacerbated societal division along religious, ethnic and geographical lines, making future conflict more likely.⁶¹
10. Thus far the Nigerian Government's attempts to resolve the conflict have been ineffective and there seems to be no end in sight. The long-term consequences of failure to reduce the violence are severe. There is the enormous cost in terms of human lives but there is also the potential for economic collapse, famine, further mass displacement of civilians and even more conflict, as the two major religious groups in the country become increasingly polarised.

WHAT IS CAUSING THE VIOLENCE?

11. To discover what factors are contributing to the violence, the APPG heard testimony from Nigerian and international experts during several formal oral evidence sessions held in the UK Houses of Parliament. The APPG also held several smaller meetings and received written submissions from a wide range of different organisations and individuals. This evidence was bolstered with data from news articles and reports on the issue by think tanks, academics and NGOs, as well as information from a UK Government-initiated conference on the issue at Wilton Park in February 2020.
12. Nigeria is a large, complex country whose people are not split into monolithic communities. There are varied actors in distinct regions. For this reason, what drives violence in one area may not necessarily be what is driving violence in another.⁶² Moreover, many farming and herding communities in Nigeria are still living peacefully.⁶³ However, while acknowledging this complexity and variance, the APPG's investigation demonstrates that there are several prominent factors that contribute to the herder-farmer violence.

⁵⁸ Andras Besztercze, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Mercy Corps, 22 November 2018.

⁵⁹ Emmanuel Ogebe, 'Rivers of Blood on The River Benue Parts 1& 2: Consolidated Human Rights Fact-Finding Report on Killings by Herdsmen In Nigeria's Benue State In 2018' (2018).

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ International Crisis Group, 'Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence. Africa Report No. 262' (ICG, 2018). Available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>.

⁶² Oliver Owen, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, University of Oxford, 22 November 2018.

⁶³ Adam Higazi and Oliver Owen, Written Submission to APPG Inquiry, University of Amsterdam, University of Oxford, 22 November 2018.

Increased Competition for Resources

13. Numerous academics and non-governmental organisations (such as Amnesty International⁶⁴, International Crisis Group⁶⁵, the Institute of Economics and Peace⁶⁶, Search for Common Ground⁶⁷), UN bodies (the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation⁶⁸), and the British⁶⁹ and Nigerian Governments⁷⁰ identified competition for resources as a principal cause of violence involving farmers and herders in Nigeria.
14. Mercy Corps, the UK Government via then Minister for State for Africa, Harriet Baldwin MP, and Dr. Oliver Owen of Oxford University gave evidence to the APPG that the age-old conflict between nomadic herders and farmers in Nigeria has been exacerbated by factors such as rapid population growth, climate change and desertification. These factors have decreased the water available for land and grazing and put pressure on resources. As herders take their cattle further south to graze, they come into conflict with local farmers, who accuse the herders of encroaching onto their land and damaging their crops.⁷¹ The Archbishop of Canterbury echoed this view, arguing that climate change and insecurity had pushed herders South in pursuit of increasingly limited resources and into greater conflict with settled farming communities.⁷² In the absence of appropriate dispute settlement mechanisms, these conflicts often turn violent and trigger cycles of reprisal attacks.⁷³
15. An article from the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting describing climate change's impact on violence in the Sahel outlines some of the environmental challenges facing the region: "The United Nations estimates that roughly 80% of the Sahel's farmland is degraded...But the land available to pastoralists is shrinking... Declining grain and food production is forcing pastoralists into a desperate search for fertile pasture."⁷⁴
16. This worrying picture was supported by the evidence of SfCG who note that in Nigeria desertification is worsening, with the Sahara Desert "advancing southwards at a rate of nearly half a mile per year, resulting in desertification of almost one-fifth of the total Nigerian land

⁶⁴ Amnesty International, 'Harvest of Death Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders In Nigeria' (Amnesty International, 2018). Available at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF>.

⁶⁵ International Crisis Group, 'Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence. Africa Report No. 262' (ICG, 2018).

Available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>.

⁶⁶ Serge Stroobants, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Institute for Economics and Peace, 1 April 2019.

⁶⁷ Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, 'Criminality & Reprisal Attacks In Nigeria's Middle Belt' (Search for Common Ground, 2017).

Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

⁶⁸ Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations, 'Causes, Effects and Resolution of Farmers-Nomadic Cattle Herders Conflict in Delta State, Nigeria [2010]' (FAO, 2011). Available at: http://www.agriculturaits.czu.cz/03/03_43.htm.

⁶⁹ Harriet Baldwin MP, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 22 November 2018.

⁷⁰ Abba Kiyari, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Nigerian Government, 16 January 2019.

⁷¹ Andras Besztercze, Harriet Baldwin MP, Oliver Owen, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Mercy Corps, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, University of Oxford, 22 November 2018.

⁷² The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Church of England, 3 December 2018.

⁷³ Dr Saleh Momale, 'Violence in Nigeria's Middle Belt Region on Nigeria: Briefing Notes', Forum on Farmer and Herder Relations in Nigeria, 1 April 2019.

⁷⁴ Robert Muggah and José Luengo Cabrera, 'The Sahel is Engulfed by Violence. Climate Change, Food Insecurity and Extremists are Largely to Blame,' World Economic Forum, 23 Jan 2019. Available at:

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/all-the-warning-signs-are-showing-in-the-sahel-we-must-act-now/>.

area.⁷⁵ They also note that this situation is worsened by Nigerian deforestation practices which have led to nearly half the native tree population being lost between 2000 and 2010 alone.⁷⁶

17. The Archbishop of Canterbury pointed to the disappearing surface area of Lake Chad as a factor putting more pressure on resources.⁷⁷ According to SfCG, “Over 30 million people in the four surrounding countries are dependent on Lake Chad for water. However, the surface area of Lake Chad has decreased from 15,500 square miles to 840 square miles from 1963 to 2001 – a decrease of nearly 95 percent... Nigeria’s government officials have documented the shrinkage of more than 800 bodies of water as a contributing cause of violence”.⁷⁸
18. This dramatic change in environmental conditions has coincided with dramatic population growth, thereby limiting resources even further. According to SfCG: “Nigeria’s population nearly doubled between 1990 and 2015, from 95 million to 182 million. Population growth is expected to continue to be high, with population estimates of 440 million by 2050.”⁷⁹ This increased population has led to increased demand for food and the expansion of farmland, thereby reducing areas for grazing even further: “From 1990 to 2014, the area harvested increased by nearly 97 percent, from 8.4 million acres to 247 million acres in 2014.”⁸⁰
19. Encroachment onto grazing land has also put pressure on resources. Amnesty International visited Adamawa State where they found that “farmlands, schools, petrol stations and other structures have been erected in several places along the 500-kilometre grazing route that extends from Toungo local government area to Limankara on the border with Cameroon. People using this route were often seen herding cattle around these structures, even sometimes coming onto the expressway. This increase in farming and other large-scale developmental activities... have resulted in growing encroachment on what used to be grazing routes or reserves.”⁸¹ Poor management of resources, urban growth, encroachment and land grabbing by elites has been a key factor in increasing the pressure on resources in Nigeria.⁸²
20. Insecurity in the North of Nigeria has also contributed to the southward migration of herders. The Abuja Policy Dialogue Series noted that the Boko Haram insurgency has meant that “important grazing areas and water sources became at once closed off to pastoralists. Grazing

⁷⁵ Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, ‘Criminality & Reprisal Attacks In Nigeria’s Middle Belt’ (Search for Common Ground, 2017) 15. Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 15.

⁷⁷ The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Church of England, 3 Dec 2018

⁷⁸ Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, ‘Criminality & Reprisal Attacks In Nigeria’s Middle Belt’ (Search for Common Ground, 2017) 15. Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 15.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 15.

⁸¹ Amnesty International, ‘Harvest of Death Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders In Nigeria’ (Amnesty International, 2018) 15. Available at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF>.

⁸² Adam Higazi and Oliver Owen, Written Submission to APPG Inquiry, University of Amsterdam, University of Oxford, 22 November 2018.

lands in Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Gombe and Bauchi became inaccessible to nomads and their livestock.”⁸³

21. This combination of poor resource management, climate change, population growth and insecurity has led to enormous pressure on resources. This pressure has forced herders to drive their cattle to wherever water and grass are available which, in many cases, has been the land of settled farming communities resulting in increasing conflict.

Breakdown of traditional mediation mechanisms

22. Historically, village chiefs and herder leaders have kept the peace, mediating between parties and coming to mutually accepted decisions which were kept by sending anyone who defied them to face local authorities.⁸⁴ The increased conflict has strained the capacity of these leaders to reduce tensions and amicably resolve conflict. This has led to the breakdown of historical dispute settlement mechanisms and in turn, facilitated conflict turning to violence.⁸⁵ Moreover, many herders have been pushed further and further South into areas, which historically did not have large herder populations and which therefore never developed effective customary means of regulating land use between farmers and herders.⁸⁶ According to Dr. Adam Higazi of the University of Amsterdam and Dr. Oliver Owen of Oxford University, “In many such places, in the South, incoming herders have come into conflict not only with farmers but also local cattle-rearers (including established Fulani communities in the South who have been there for half a century or more and are well integrated).”⁸⁷
23. The importance of inter-communal mediation in promoting trust and reducing conflict is illustrated by the success that peace-building endeavours in Nigeria have had in reducing tensions and violence. Many of these endeavours have been led by non-governmental organisation (NGOs) and replicate aspects of traditional dispute settlement mechanisms. According to SfCG, Nigerian-based organizations and agencies such as the Inter-Faith Mediation Centre (IMC), Justice Development and Peace Caritas, and Community Action for Popular Participation (CAPP) have all had some degree of success using mediation to foster harmony, rebuild trust and stop violence in several communities in the Middle Belt.⁸⁸
24. Mercy Corps presented to the APPG the results of their successful four-year peace-building programme in the Middle Belt of Nigeria. This programme, which was evaluated through a randomised control trial, resulted in significant increases around trust, security and

⁸³ Abuja Policy Dialogue Series (Challenges of Pastoralism in Nigeria), Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, January-February 2018, 3.

⁸⁴ International Crisis Group, ‘Stopping Nigeria’s Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence. Africa Report No. 262’ (ICG, 2018). Available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Adam Higazi and Oliver Owen, Written Submission to APPG Inquiry, University of Amsterdam, University of Oxford, 22 November 2018.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁸⁸ Chris Kwaja and Bukola Ademola-Adelehin, ‘Between Farmers and Herders Responses To Conflicts Mapping Past Efforts and Opportunities For Violence Prevention’ (Search for Common Ground, 2018). Available at: <https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Responses-to-Conflicts-between-Farmers-and-Herders-in-the-Middle-Belt-FINAL.pdf>.

perceptions of security. The impact of this intervention was found to be even larger when compared with the communities who didn't receive the intervention and who were shown to have had significant decreases in trust over the same time period.⁸⁹

25. These examples, and many more like them, demonstrate the importance of non-violent dispute settlement mechanisms to preventing conflict. The fact that many of these are now being run by NGOs highlights the vacuum created by the breakdown of traditional mechanisms and the need for the Nigerian Federal and State Governments to encourage mediation between communities at all levels. As stated by Miranda Hurst of Mercy Corps in her evidence to the APPG, "donor funded programmes can only go so far if the Nigerian government itself is not actively promoting peace".⁹⁰

Criminality

26. Another factor contributing to escalating violence is growing criminality, which drives herders South, increases tensions between communities and directly causes violence and deaths. According to FFARN: "Groups of armed bandits exist in many of Nigeria's rural areas, particularly in the North West and the Middle Belt of Nigeria. Rural communities across Northern Nigeria, including the Fulani herdsmen and farming communities of diverse ethnic and religious identities, have lost their livelihoods to village raids, cattle rustling and kidnapping."⁹¹ Human Rights Watch report that bandit attacks resulted in the death of "at least 400 people and displaced over 38,000 in 2018" and that the Northern State of Zamfara was perhaps the State most affected.⁹² This violence increases insecurity in the North and adds to the pressure driving herders South.
27. More research is needed to determine the ethnic and religious makeup of criminal groups but Dr. Momale of FFARN told the APPG that there are many cases where people have misattributed attacks by bandits to Fulani herders.⁹³ Herder groups have also made this claim.⁹⁴ Former US Ambassador to Nigeria John Campbell, ret. Ralph Bunche Senior Fellow for Africa Policy Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington, DC, submitted to the APPG that, "villages routinely attribute attacks to the other religion/ethnicity/user of land while avoiding identifying the attackers as bandits."⁹⁵
28. Fulani herders have engaged in criminality and have also been victims of criminality, having been targeted by bandits and cattle rustlers.⁹⁶ SfCG report that this growth of criminality and

⁸⁹ Andras Besztercze, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Mercy Corps 22 May 2019.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Dr Saleh Momale, 'Violence in Nigeria's Middle Belt Region on Nigeria: Briefing Notes', Forum on Farmer and Herder Relations in Nigeria, 1 April 2019.

⁹² Human Rights Watch, 'Nigeria: Events of 2018.' Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/nigeria>.

⁹³ Dr Saleh Momale, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Forum on Farmer and Herder Relations in Nigeria, 1 April 2019.

⁹⁴ International Crisis Group, 'Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence. Africa Report No. 262' (ICG, 2018). Available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>.

⁹⁵ Ambassador John Campbell, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Council on Foreign Relations, 13 May 2019.

⁹⁶ Abuja Policy Dialogue Series (Challenges of Pastoralism in Nigeria), Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, January-February 2018.

cattle rustling has coincided with the skyrocketing price of cattle which means, “imported cattle breeds can be sold for an average cost of 430,000 to 525,000 Naira (USD \$1300-1700) and local cattle can be sold for an average price between 100,000 to 200,000 Naira (USD \$300-650).”⁹⁷ The high prices for cattle have attracted more sophisticated, better resourced actors into the industry such as, “local political elites, retired military officers, and other wealthy individuals [who] will purchase or receive cattle and then hire pastoralists to manage the cows for them. In many cases, these are cattle-less Fulani who are given their own cattle in repayment for herding another’s cows. These hired herders are then responsible for protecting the cattle from theft, injury, and disease and are oftentimes armed by their bosses for these purposes.”⁹⁸

29. Similarly, high cattle prices have attracted more sophisticated, organised and better armed criminals who seek to profit from the increasing monetary value of cattle, and instability in rural areas. As described by SfCG: ‘conflict entrepreneurs’ are taking advantage of the Boko Haram violence in the Northeast and general insecurity in Nigeria to engage in widespread ‘rural banditry.’ These gangs of criminals instigate fear and violence to raid communities for livestock and plunder. They often attack during the middle of the night and create chaos, burning homes and shooting guns in the air, to cause people to flee and more effectively manoeuvre cattle out of the community.”⁹⁹
30. This criminality exacerbates the farmer-herder conflict by increasing tensions between religious groups. It also forces herders to migrate further to escape bandits, increasing the likelihood that they will come into conflict with farmers over grazing areas and other resources. SfCG report that bandits often pursue migrating herders, stealing their livestock and raiding local communities. This adds to the feeling of these communities that they are facing a violent, northern Muslim invasion.¹⁰⁰ This violent criminal behaviour also begets further violent criminal behaviour, as people displaced from their communities and robbed of their livelihoods are more likely to become criminals themselves in order to survive.¹⁰¹ Supporting this view, Okoli and Lenshie state that “crops of herdsmen displaced by conflict and climatic adversities...have taken to guerrilla criminality”.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, ‘Criminality & Reprisal Attacks In Nigeria’s Middle Belt’ (Search for Common Ground, 2017) 10. Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁹⁹ Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, ‘Criminality & Reprisal Attacks In Nigeria’s Middle Belt’ (Search for Common Ground, 2017) 11. Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 11.

¹⁰¹ Abuja Policy Dialogue Series (Challenges of Pastoralism in Nigeria), Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, January–February 2018.

¹⁰² Al Okoli and Nsemeba Lenshie, ‘Nigeria: Nomadic Migrancy and Rural Violence’ (2018) Conflict Studies Quarterly 25, 77.

Governmental Response

31. In the evidence analysed by the APPG, there was consensus that the Nigerian Government's response to conflict involving farmers and herders has been inadequate or ineffective and that this has allowed violence to emerge and escalate. There is the belief that the lack of political will or capacity to address conflict is one of the main drivers of violence.
32. Successive Nigerian Governments have been accused of adding to the pressure on resources by developing infrastructure on lands previously used for grazing and failing to maintain grazing reserves.¹⁰³ For example, "A reserve in Wase Local Government Area (LGA)...was designated specifically for grazing. However, various dams and irregular rainfall drained the water resources and dried up the grass. The government had agreed to periodically fumigate against a large infestation of tsetse flies, but neglected this over time, creating an inhospitable environment for herding."¹⁰⁴
33. Another example of how Government intervention to try and manage resources has exacerbated conflict is the introduction of anti-grazing legislation. ICG reported that one of the primary reasons for the escalation of violence in Nigeria in 2018 was "the introduction in November 2017 of anti-grazing laws vehemently opposed by herders in Benue and Taraba states, and the resultant exodus of herders and cattle, largely into neighbouring Nasarawa and, to a lesser degree, Adamawa, sparking clashes with farmers in those states."¹⁰⁵ Some commentators point out that significant violence involving farmers and herders had been taking place in these states prior to the introduction of the anti-grazing laws, so they cannot be claimed as root causes for the violence.¹⁰⁶ But this does not change the fact that violence in these States seems to have increased in response to the Governmental intervention. Recognition of this does not absolve those who committed violence of responsibility for their actions. It is, however, necessary to understand the context in which violent conflict has emerged in these States.
34. The Nigerian Government has also been accused of compounding its inability to effectively manage resources by being unable to protect communities from violence or to prosecute those who commit violence. ICG argue that the main reason for the dramatic escalation in violence is the failure of the federal government to prosecute past perpetrators or heed early warnings of impending attacks.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Abuja Policy Dialogue Series (Challenges of Pastoralism in Nigeria), Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, January-February 2018.

¹⁰⁴ Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, 'Criminality & Reprisal Attacks In Nigeria's Middle Belt' (Search for Common Ground, 2017) 17. Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁰⁵ International Crisis Group, 'Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence. Africa Report No. 262' (ICG, 2018). Available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>.

¹⁰⁶ Emmanuel Ogebe, 'Rivers of Blood on The River Benue Parts 1& 2: Consolidated Human Rights Fact-Finding Report on Killings by Herdsmen in Nigeria's Benue State In 2018' (2018).

¹⁰⁷ International Crisis Group, 'Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence. Africa Report No. 262' (ICG, 2018). Available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>.

35. There are many reports of survivors of violence informing authorities about impending attacks and/or about the identity of attackers and yet no arrests being made.¹⁰⁸ According to Amnesty International, “Eye witnesses, victims, local officials and others independently interviewed have recounted several incidents where police and soldiers have either ignored credible warnings of impending attacks and/or abandoned people during or just before deadly attacks by heavily armed groups, suspected to be members of herder or farmer communities.”¹⁰⁹ For example, in December 2017, 50 policemen were deployed to Dong district in Adamawa in response to rumours that an attack by Fulani herders was impending. The policemen arrived but eventually left the area three days before the attack took place. It seems that these and many other attacks could have been prevented if security agencies had responded appropriately.¹¹⁰
36. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Court of Justice censured the inadequacy of the Nigerian Government’s efforts to protect citizens and investigate acts of violence involving farmers and herders on Tuesday 26 February 2019. The court ordered the Nigerian Government to investigate mass killings and destruction of properties committed by Fulani herders in the Agatu Community in Benue State in 2016. The court stated that the Government “is obliged to protect the human rights of its citizens” and ordered the Government to identify and prosecute the perpetrators and redress the victims.¹¹¹
37. The insecurity that local communities face, and the impunity that those who engage in violence have thus far enjoyed, has led to groups of farmers and herders forming militias. These are usually formed along ethno-religious lines to protect community interests, as they conclude that if they don’t, no one will. This thought process was expressed clearly by former Army Chief of Staff and Defence Minister, Lt General Theophilus Danjuma, who called on Christians in his home state of Taraba to stop depending on government security forces and to take up arms to protect themselves. He argued that the armed forces were, “not neutral; they collude” in the, “ethnic cleansing in … riverine states” by Fulani militia and insisted that villagers must defend themselves because, “depending on the armed forces”, will result in them dying, “one by one. The ethnic cleansing must stop.”¹¹²
38. ICG note that ethnic groups in Nigeria do not publicly admit to having organised militia but that many farming communities reportedly “formed militias and vigilante groups to fend off Fulani herders whose cattle grazed in their fields… [and] others attacked herders in retaliation for

¹⁰⁸ Amnesty International, ‘Harvest of Death Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders in Nigeria’ (Amnesty International, 2018). Available at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF>.

¹⁰⁹ Amnesty International, ‘Harvest of Death Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders in Nigeria’ (Amnesty International, 2018) 50. Available at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF>.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ The Economic Community of West African States Court of Justice, *Rev. Fr. Solomon Mfa et al. v Federal Republic of Nigeria et al.*, Judgment No. ECW/CCJ/JUD/06/19, 26 February 2019, 29. Available at: http://prod.courtecowas.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/JUD_ECW_CCJ_JUD_06_19.pdf.

¹¹² LT General Theophilus Y. Danjuma, ‘Nigeria Armed Forces collude with bandits to Kill Nigerians’, 25 March 2018. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWWEIwoBdCg>.

alleged damage to farms or to force the “strangers” out of their domains”.¹¹³ According to data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, which was analysed by SfCG, 36 different political, ethnic, or communal “militias” were involved in inter-communal violence in 2019 resulting in the loss of over 1,000 civilian lives.¹¹⁴

39. These militias, who are often backed by ethnic, political and religious leaders, have been forming in much greater numbers recently and have also been engaging in increasingly pre-meditated attacks.¹¹⁵ In the case of the Fulani, militia are now also utilising sophisticated weapons such as AK 47s.¹¹⁶ In fact, some Fulani militias are now so well armed that one army General in Adamawa claimed that troops had to use rocket-propelled grenades in order to prevent them from attacking Bachama villages.¹¹⁷ In addition to attacks being increasingly pre-meditated, ICG noted that militia violence increasingly takes the form of “scorched-earth campaigns that kill scores, raze villages and burn down farms.”¹¹⁸
40. According to Dr Adam Higazi and Dr. Oliver Owen, Nigerian “Police have sometimes intervened early to resolve disputes before they become lethal, and in some places (Ekiti for example) farmers and herders are happy to mediate their disputes at the police station. But in other places, the police have been risk-averse and they have not been active in getting involved in enforcing peaceful settlement.”¹¹⁹ Of course, Nigeria is a vast country and there are significant capacity constraints on the security forces’ ability to deal with militias and to provide security. These constraints cannot be dismissed by outsiders. Therefore, we should not underestimate the challenge facing the Nigerian Government and its security forces.
41. Limited resources have severely restrained the ability of security agencies to take control of the violence in Nigeria. Former US Ambassador to Nigeria, John Campbell, told the APPG that the, “police presence throughout the [middle belt]—indeed, throughout the entire country—is weak. Nation-wide, the police numbers [are] only about 350,000, and are poorly trained and poorly paid. The number stationed in the Middle Belt is small. Security—always limited—is provided by the Nigerian army, which has units stationed in every Middle Belt state. But, the army, too, is stretched thin, often poorly trained and poorly paid. Police and military salaries can be in arrears for weeks or months. In effect, the writ of the Federal and state governments does not run across large areas of the Middle Belt. They are ungoverned spaces.”¹²⁰

¹¹³ International Crisis Group, ‘Stopping Nigeria’s Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence. Africa Report No. 262’ (ICG, 2018) 4-5. Available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>.

¹¹⁴ Katie Smith, Analysis of ACLED Data, Search for Common Ground, Email Conversation with APPG Director, 24 Feb 2020.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Amnesty International, ‘Harvest of Death Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders in Nigeria’ (Amnesty International, 2018). Available at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF>.

¹¹⁷ International Crisis Group, ‘Stopping Nigeria’s Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence. Africa Report No. 262’ (ICG, 2018).

Available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 5.

¹¹⁹ Adam Higazi and Oliver Owen, Written Submission to APPG Inquiry, University of Amsterdam, University of Oxford, 22 November 2018, 8.

¹²⁰ Ambassador John Campbell, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Council on Foreign Relations, 13 May 2019, 2.

42. The Nigerian Government has made deployments of security personnel to try to respond to violence but according to ICG, “The personnel are still inadequate to secure many areas, and units are ill equipped to respond speedily to distress calls from remote villages. Some police units deployed in rural areas are operating cautiously, mindful that officers have been ambushed and killed. In many areas, the forces deployed are inadequate to deter heavily armed militias who attack villages at night and retreat to their forest camps before dawn.”¹²¹
43. While these restraints are significant and undermine capacity to bring peace, limited resources cannot explain the many reported instances where security forces have been themselves responsible for attacks against communities.¹²² For example, Amnesty International reported a visit to Kwesati Village in Ussa LGA of Taraba State in May 2018, “where several residents told the organisation about the brutal harassment by soldiers they’d had to endure, including breaking into their homes in the middle of the nights to harass and threaten and beat them.”¹²³ Such attacks naturally increase feelings of persecution among communities, making them less likely to cooperate with security forces and more likely to take up arms to protect themselves.¹²⁴ This, combined with slow communications from President Buhari, has also led to perceptions by victimised communities that the Federal Government has no will to address the issue.¹²⁵
44. Positive Examples where local Government and security forces have been proactive and managed to reduce conflict do exist. According to Dr Adam Higazi and Dr. Oliver Owen, “Gombe State remains one of the more peaceful states in Nigeria with generally good relations between farmers and Fulani herders, including in religiously mixed areas. Key to this is political will, good communications, police professionalism, and early involvement before conflict escalates. This shows that the key factor in whether these pressures become conflicts or not is goodwill and genuine interest in rural governance on the part of State and Federal Government. With that, and with foresight, [resource] pressures can be managed. Without that, actors are increasingly going to rely on self-defence and violence.”¹²⁶
45. Thus, the Nigerian Government’s general inability or unwillingness to effectively manage resources, or to offer security or justice to the communities subjected to violence, is one of the key drivers of the escalating violence as it has led to increased competition and the rise of ethno-religious militias.

¹²¹ International Crisis Group, ‘Stopping Nigeria’s Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence. Africa Report No. 262’ (ICG, 2018) 22. Available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>.

¹²² Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, ‘Criminality & Reprisal Attacks in Nigeria’s Middle Belt’ (Search for Common Ground, 2017). Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

¹²³ Amnesty International, ‘Harvest of Death Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders in Nigeria’ (Amnesty International, 2018) 60. Available at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF>.

¹²⁴ Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, ‘Criminality & Reprisal Attacks in Nigeria’s Middle Belt’ (Search for Common Ground, 2017). Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

¹²⁵ Adam Higazi and Oliver Owen, Written Submission to APPG Inquiry, University of Amsterdam, University of Oxford, 22 November 2018, 2.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 10.

Flow of Weapons

46. Evidence analysed by the APPG suggests that the ready availability and low price of firearms has also played a role in escalating violence. The Archbishop of Canterbury gave evidence to the APPG that ongoing instability in Libya has led to a huge increase in the number of firearms flowing into Nigeria.¹²⁷ According to Adam Higazi and Oliver Owen, “guns are sourced via ordinary criminal networks, in which arms obtained in post-conflict zones such as Libya are imported and traded in known underground markets in the Niger Delta and South-East.”¹²⁸ Combined with the huge supply of weapons left over from civil wars in Liberia, Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone, as well as the domestic Nigerian arms manufacturing industry¹²⁹, this means that firearms are readily available in Nigeria and have halved in price in recent years.¹³⁰ While obviously not causing conflict in itself, this preponderance of readily available weapons has played a role in exacerbating violence in Nigeria.

Misinformation

47. Another factor that is widely considered to have exacerbated the conflict between farmers and herders is the spread of misinformation via media or social media. Dr. Oliver Owen noted that stories, and even footage, of violence from other African countries are often incorrectly attributed to farmers or herders in Nigeria.¹³¹ This has led to heightened tensions, violent reprisals and an environment in which peace building is increasingly difficult.

48. Stephanie Hegarty of the BBC shared with the APPG a recent investigation by BBC Africa Eye. This investigation highlighted how false stories and videos about Christians or Muslims are circulated widely and rapidly on social media in Nigeria and that this often leads to violence. One example from the investigation was a photo of a child killed by a head wound in Brazzaville Congo. This violence was attributed to Nigerian Fulani. This led to a group of 11 Fulani being killed by a group of young Berom men: “Some were set alight. Others were hacked to death with machetes. Days later, their bodies were still being discovered across the city, dumped in ditches, behind houses and along the roadsides. Many were burnt beyond recognition.”¹³² The violence was directly attributed to the photo, “As soon as we saw those images, we wanted to just strangle any Fulani man standing next to us,” one Berom youth leader told the BBC.¹³³

49. Bulama Bukarti from the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change told the APPG that misinformation about the situation in Nigeria is often spread through social media. Echoing the content of the BBC Africa report, Bukarti also discussed how false stories can stoke anger and conflict. He showed a photo that was circulated widely throughout Nigeria of a woman

¹²⁷ The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Church of England, 3 December 2018.

¹²⁸ Adam Higazi and Oliver Owen, Written Submission to APPG Inquiry, University of Amsterdam, University of Oxford, 22 November 2018, 6.

¹²⁹ Ambassador John Campbell, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Council on Foreign Relations, 13 May 2019.

¹³⁰ The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Church of England, 3 December 2018.

¹³¹ Oliver Owen, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, University of Oxford, 22 November 2018.

¹³² Yemisi Adegoke, ‘Like. Share. Kill. Nigerian Police Say False Information on Facebook is Killing People’, BBC Africa Eye, 13 November 2018. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/nigeria_fake_news.

¹³³ Ibid.

being trained by Fulani to kill Christians with an AK-47. However, when he investigated the photo, he found it to be taken from a video of a woman in Sudan with no connection to the conflict in Nigeria. He then showed several other photos that had been misattributed to Fulani violence.¹³⁴

50. Ilia Djadi, formerly of the Christian news organisation World Watch Monitor, claimed that the capacity for videos and photos to spread across Nigeria in days opens doors to all manner of manipulation of data or facts. He described a situation where most users are not aware of the impact of what they are sharing. However, he also mentioned that there are those who are fully aware of what they are doing and who intentionally spread misinformation through social media with the aim of manipulating others and causing conflict.¹³⁵ The BBC highlighted once such person, a man named Idris Ahmed, who has been known to spread incendiary statements on Facebook such as describing the entire Berom ethnic group as terrorists, or about military complicity in the killing of Fulani men.¹³⁶
51. Facebook and other social media companies have not responded vigorously enough to the problem of hate speech and misinformation on Nigeria social media. According to the BBC, “Facebook’s third-party fact-checking partners in Nigeria have committed just four full-time fact checkers to review false information, on a platform used by 24 million Nigerians...more worrying still is that none of the four fact-checkers deployed full-time by Facebook’s partners in Nigeria speaks Hausa, a language spoken by millions in the country.”¹³⁷

History and Religious Identity

52. History changes the way people interpret current events. Mervin Crawford Young, the American Political Scientist and scholar of African politics, is reported to have said that in a “highly polarized environment, members of cultural communities continually scan the horizon for signs of threats, and... the best way they comprehend these threats is by association with similar historical experiences.”¹³⁸ To some extent, historical conflict along religious identity lines between Fulani Muslims and Christian groups has impacted how people see current events and has exacerbated violence.
53. In the beginning of the 19th Century, the Sokoto Caliphate was established under Uthman dan Fodio amidst violent raids, the enslavement of many non-Muslims from smaller tribes and the annexation of land for Fulani pastoral clans. When the British conquered the Caliphate in 1903, it was the world’s largest slave polity, with Fulani leaders preying on smaller tribes to feed the

¹³⁴ Bulama Bukarti, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 12 December 2018.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Yemisi Adegoke, ‘Like. Share. Kill. Nigerian Police Say False Information on Facebook is Killing People’, BBC Africa Eye, 13 November 2018. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/nigeria_fake_news.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Jonathan Ishaku, ‘Herdsmen Violence: The Politics of Security Management in A Fragile State’ paper presented at a colloquium organised by the Nigeria Union of Journalists, Plateau state chapter at Leadership Institute, Jos, 3 May 2018

slave trade for a century.¹³⁹ As these smaller tribes abandoned their traditional religions during the colonial period, they turned to Christianity and held on to the memory of the violence they experienced.¹⁴⁰

54. This memory and the fear associated with it combines with contemporary events, such as the adoption of Shari'a law by 12 Northern States in 1999, to create a tense, divided society in which actions by Fulani or Muslims are sometimes seen as a resurgence or continuation of historical violence and imperialism.¹⁴¹ One study of the conflict examined by the APPG acknowledges that "socio-economic factors drive the [farmer-herder] conflict" but also claims that there is an extra dimension to the violence and that "the attacks can be seen as a continuation of jihad seeking an Islamic state throughout Nigeria".¹⁴² Fulani groups have also claimed that violence against them is part of an agenda to subjugate or destroy their people. According to ICG, "The Fulani youth group, JAFUYAN, said killings of Fulani in Numan were 'the latest in a coordinated agenda to wipe out our people systematically through ethnic cleansing.'"¹⁴³
55. Fr Bature of the Forum on Farmer and Herder Relations in Nigeria (FFARN) submitted to the APPG that, "crop damages from herds, many of which are led by the predominantly Muslim Fulani herders, that may have seen as an accidental act...are now perceived as deliberate and provocative acts against farmers, many of whom are Christian. This narrative has triggered the reactions of farming communities to see Fulani herdsmen as both competitors for natural resources and part of an agenda to annihilate their way of life."¹⁴⁴ This impact of religious identity was similarly described by the former Attorney General of Nasarawa State, Suleiman Nchi who said, "The parties in a conflict may be carrying or expressing different religious identities. A simple argument between a Fulani-herdsman and a farmer from a community that is predominantly Christian over land, for example, may take on the tenor of a sectarian crisis since the Fulani herdsman is almost always a Muslim."¹⁴⁵
56. The APPG received evidence from several sources which helps to explain how the historical and religious context in Nigeria impacts perceptions of violence and heightens conflict. One prominent Nigerian Christian Leader submitted to the APPG that "Every religious cleric, whether they are Muslims or Christians, in the local communities will immediately attribute the conflict to religion. This is because there are many audio and videotapes on the social media and being played on CDs in markets in northern Nigeria, of Muslim clerics attacking, insulting, and denigrating the bible, Christians, and the person of Jesus. There are Christians

¹³⁹ Ambassador John Campbell, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Council on Foreign Relations, 13 May 2019.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Open Doors World Watch Research, 'Nigeria: Six Things to Know About The Deadly Fulani Violence In The Middle Belt Region' (World Watch Research, 2017) 2. Available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/NIGERIA-Things-to-know-about-the-deadly-Fulani-violence-2017-08-21.pdf>.

¹⁴³ International Crisis Group, 'Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence. Africa Report No. 262' (ICG, 2018) 14. Available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>.

¹⁴⁴ Reverend Anthony Bature, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Forum on Farmer and Herder Relations in Nigeria, 22 May 2019, 3.

¹⁴⁵ Suleiman Nchi, Religion and Politics in Nigeria: The Constitutional Issues (Greenworld: Jos, 2013) 229.

who see all that is happening as an Islamic expansionist agenda.”¹⁴⁶ This statement demonstrates how in a highly polarised, insecure environment, actions may be interpreted through the lens of religious identity and historical conflict. This tendency to view disputes as part of an existential battle between religious groups, and the fears and anger and stereotypes that groups have about the other based on these long histories of conflict, makes it much more likely that people will be willing to engage in violent conflict and has significant ramifications on prospects for peacebuilding.

57. Political actors working to further their own interests have also intentionally deepened these historical, religious-identity based divisions.¹⁴⁷ The Archbishop of Canterbury told the APPG that in Nigeria “It is easier, and often more effective, to blame the challenges people face on another religious identity group than to explain and tackle the complicated cocktail of political, economic, social and environmental factors that are at the root of their problems. The politicisation of difference between groups often leads to conflict in Nigeria, where there is an ongoing trend of violence between ethnic and religious groups increasing in the run up to elections.”¹⁴⁸
58. Dr Momale submitted to the APPG that, “In Nigeria, there is a concept of ‘indigeneity’ or the land-based origins of one’s belonging to a particular area of Nigeria. Certain groups are considered ‘indigenes’ of an area and are afforded certain rights for that status. The Fulani are considered ‘settlers’ in the Middle Belt, which excludes them from certain rights and privileges enjoyed by indigenes of the same communities. While the debate over indigeneity is not new, politicians and others often manipulate these divisions for their own benefit. This was repeatedly witnessed in Plateau State. For instance, in June 2018 groups of thugs were hired in the city of Jos by local politicians to incite clashes based on ethnic, religious, and political identities.”¹⁴⁹ Politicians can then appeal to their identity group as the only ones who can protect them from other tribal, religious, ethnic groups and guarantee their resources.¹⁵⁰
59. Given this evidence, the APPG was not surprised – though deeply troubled – to hear claims that there was an escalation in conflict in 2018, considering that there were national elections in February 2019.¹⁵¹ These claims are supported by the data collected by the Council on Foreign Relations which shows that deaths due to violence in Nigeria over the past three years peaked in January 2019 and, despite an increase in the month of January 2020, have been generally declining after the national elections.¹⁵² This supports the view shared by CSW that, “The mutation of the limited traditional conflict into an existential threat to the nation can be attributed, to some extent, to competition for political advantage.”¹⁵³ The below case study by

¹⁴⁶ Archbishop Benjamin Kwashi, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, June 2019, 6.

¹⁴⁷ Dr Saleh Momale, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Forum on Farmer and Herder Relations in Nigeria, 1 April 2019.

¹⁴⁸ The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, 3 December 2018.

¹⁴⁹ Dr Saleh Momale, ‘Violence in Nigeria’s Middle Belt Region on Nigeria: Briefing Notes’, Forum on Farmer and Herder Relations in Nigeria, 1 April 2019.

¹⁵⁰ Fostering Social Cohesion in Nigeria, Conference, Wilton Park, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 26-28 February 2020.

¹⁵¹ Dr Saleh Momale, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Forum on Farmer and Herder Relations in Nigeria, 1 April 2019.

¹⁵² John Campbell, ‘Nigeria Security Tracker’, Council on Foreign Relations, 1 February 2020. Available at:

<https://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483>.

¹⁵³ CSW, Nigeria: Farmer-Herder Issue, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, 10 June 2019, 2.

Search for Common Ground illustrates the complexity of violence involving farmers and herders and demonstrates how history, politics and religious identity can interact with competition over resources to exacerbate conflict:

"In Jos North, the capital city of Plateau state, the population consists of predominantly Christian Berom, Anaguta, and Afizere ethnic groups...considered to be 'indigenes' of Jos, and the predominantly Muslim Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups, considered to be 'settlers' or 'non-indigenes.' A status of 'indigene' provides certain privileges and access to political, economic, and communal resources. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, 'indigene' and 'non-indigene' tensions escalated, partially triggered by the creation of Jos North Local Government Area... As [groups] struggled for political influence and leadership roles within the local government, indigeneship became a political tool to attract and solidify support. Because the 'settlers' are almost entirely Muslim and the 'indigenes' are predominantly Christian, the manipulation of these identities increasingly played out through ethno-religious discrimination, segregation, hate crimes, and inter-communal violence. Widespread riots and outbreaks of violence resulted in over 1,000 deaths in 2001. As the conflict in Jos North took on a predominantly religious character, the violence spread outside of the urban areas to more rural areas of Plateau and neighbouring states. Fulani communities generally lived outside of more urban areas; however, as the violence expanded from the city centre, more rural Christian communities saw the Fulani as an 'Islamic threat.' Herdsmen increasingly became victims of cattle theft and personal attacks, including targeted attacks on Ardos [leaders] of various Fulani tribes. Reprisal attacks from afflicted members of the Fulani community followed this initial outbreak of violence. Revenge attacks continued and became cyclical exacting victims from both groups. During and after the 2008 elections, contested local government chairmanship elections incited rioting and clashes between Muslim and Christian gangs in Jos North. At least 400 people were killed and over 10,000 people displaced and another round of reprisal attacks was triggered."¹⁵⁴

60. Thus, history and religious identity, and political manipulation of these factors, play an important role in violence involving farmers and herders in Nigeria. Historical divisions along religious identity lines influence how the situation is interpreted and make people more likely to respond with violence.

Extremist Ideology

61. The escalation of violence in Nigeria must be seen in the context of the growing power and influence of Islamist extremism across the Sahel. Multiple groups, such as the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), a splinter of Boko Haram and an affiliate of the faded Daesh caliphate in Iraq and Syria, continue to extend their networks in Nigeria, Mali, Niger, Cameroon, Chad and Burkina Faso. According to Nigeria's Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, Boko Haram and ISWAP have "changed their strategy" in recent months. "They

¹⁵⁴ Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, 'Criminality & Reprisal Attacks in Nigeria's Middle Belt' (Search for Common Ground, 2017) 14. Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

have started targeting Christians and Christian villages for a specific reason, which is to trigger a religious war and throw the nation into chaos... This [does] not in any way signify that they have stopped attacking Muslims. But they seem to now have a deliberate policy of attacking Christians."¹⁵⁵

62. On 26 December 2019, ISWAP released a video claiming to show the beheading of ten Christian hostages and one Muslim in Borno State. Analysts agree that it was timed to coincide with Christmas celebrations.¹⁵⁶ On 20 January 2020, the Abubakar Shekau faction of Boko Haram executed the chair of the Christian Association of Nigeria in Adamawa state, Reverend Lawan Andimi.¹⁵⁷
63. Several submissions to the APPG inquiry conflated ISWAP, Boko Haram and Fulani herders without evidence to connect the groups and their actions beyond their shared religious identity. Others described the Fulani, a group of millions of people with hundreds of clans and many different lineages spread across the huge geographic terrain of Nigeria and the Sahel, as one homogenous group – a tendency which is not exclusive to Nigeria.¹⁵⁸
64. It is necessary to avoid conflating these groups, not least because Fulani herders in the North who do not adhere to Islamist ideology have been victims of Boko Haram. According to Dr Adam Higazi and Dr Oliver Owen, “Well over 1,500 pastoralists have been killed by Boko Haram in Borno State alone and tens of thousands of cattle and sheep have been stolen by the insurgents during the conflict.”¹⁵⁹
65. Notwithstanding these important distinctions, the APPG received evidence to suggest many Fulani herders in Nigeria do adhere to an extremist ideology. They adopt a comparable strategy to Boko Haram and ISWAP and demonstrate a clear intent to target Christians and potent symbols of Christian identity. As the Bishop of Truro concluded in his report for the FCO, “the religious dimension is a significantly exacerbating factor” in clashes between farmers and herders and “targeted violence against Christian communities in the context of worship suggests that religion plays a key part.”¹⁶⁰
66. Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust have visited some of the worst-affected areas many times, reporting in 2019 that “growing numbers of Fulani have adopted a new land-grabbing policy – motivated by an extremist belief system and equipped with sophisticated weaponry – which

¹⁵⁵ Olalekan Adetayo, Friday Olokor and Rapael Ede, ‘FG makes a U-turn, admits Boko Haram targeting Christians’ Punch, 28 February 2020. Available at: <https://punchng.com/fg-makes-a-u-turn-admits-boko-haram-targeting-christians/>.

¹⁵⁶ BBC News Online, ‘Islamic State in Nigeria ‘beheads Christian hostages’, 27 December 2019, Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-50924266>

¹⁵⁷ CSW, ‘Boko Haram executes chair of Christian Association of Nigeria in Adamawa State’, 21 Jan 2020. Available at: <https://www.csw.org.uk/2020/01/21/press/4530/article.htm>

¹⁵⁸ Kaderi Bukari and Nicholaus Shareika, ‘Stereotypes, Prejudices and Exclusion of Fulani Pastoralists in Ghana, Pastoralism, 20 May2015. Available at: <https://pastoralismjournal.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s13570-015-0043-8>.

¹⁵⁹ Adam Higazi and Oliver Owen, Written Submission to APPG Inquiry, University of Amsterdam, University of Oxford, 22 November 2018, 2.

¹⁶⁰ Rt. Rev. Philip Mounstephen Bishop of Truro, ‘Bishop of Truro’s Independent Review for the Foreign Secretary of the FCO Support for Persecution Christians’ (2019). Available at: <https://christianpersecutionreview.org.uk/storage/2019/07/final-report-and-recommendations.pdf>

has led to the massacre of thousands of people and to the permanent displacement of vulnerable rural communities. While tensions between sedentary farmers and nomadic herders have existed for centuries, recent attacks suggest a worrying trend: the Fulani's military capability and ideological fervour are increasing.”¹⁶¹

67. CSW identified that “Fulani militia are targeting non-Muslim communities, particularly Christians. They’re attacking entire communities that are the most isolated and when individuals are at their most vulnerable, including men and women working in their fields. The death toll is mounting.”¹⁶²
68. Aid to the Church in Need UK drew similar conclusions: “While not necessarily sharing Boko Haram’s vision of a Muslim caliphate in northern Nigeria, the evidence suggests the Fulani herdsmen are as committed as Daesh (ISIS) affiliates to eliminating Christians in a region where the Church has grown fast.”¹⁶³
69. The Nigerian organisation Stefanos Foundation submitted to the APPG that “the violence is primarily for Islamic territorial expansion and the advancement of Sharia (Islamic law).”¹⁶⁴ They argue that “the perpetrators of the violence are Muslim extremists who cannot submit to any other law apart from Islamic law.”¹⁶⁵
70. Similarly, the Hosere Citizens Rights Initiative stated that attacks against Fulani herders in Mambilla “could not by any stretch of imagination be termed as farmer/herder crisis...It was in fact a well-planned, coordinated and executed genocide.”¹⁶⁶ Such an assessment was reflected by the Nigerian House of Representatives, which on 4 July 2018 declared killings by herders in Plateau State to be a genocide.
71. Revd Hassan John told the APPG, “The drivers of the violence in Nigeria may be complex but generally speaking Nigerians are deeply religious... So, while there are social, political and economic drivers, the average Nigerian sees all these from their religious perspective first... Christians and Muslims... see this conflict as one religious group’s fight to dominate and, if possible, exterminate the other.”¹⁶⁷
72. Likewise the former Attorney General of Nasarawa State, said: “A simple argument between a Fulani-herdsman and a farmer from a community that is predominantly Christian over land, for example, may take on the tenor of a sectarian crisis since the Fulani herdsman is almost always a Muslim.”¹⁶⁸ Such division heightens tension and makes it more likely that people will be

¹⁶¹ Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust, ‘Your Land or Your Blood: The Escalating Persecution of Christians in Northern and Central Nigeria’ (November 2019).

¹⁶² CSW, ‘Who Are The Fulani Militia?’ Available at: <https://www.csw.org.uk/nigeria-fulanimilitia>.

¹⁶³ ACN-UK, ‘Nigeria: Persecuted and Forgotten? A report on Christians oppressed for their Faith 2015-17, Available at <https://acnuk.org/pfnigeria/>

¹⁶⁴ Stefanos Foundation, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, June 2019, 2.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 2.

¹⁶⁶ Hosere Citizens Rights Initiative, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, June 2019, 2.

¹⁶⁷ Baroness Cox, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, House of Lords, March 2019, 5.

¹⁶⁸ Suleiman Nchi, Religion and Politics in Nigeria: The Constitutional Issues (Greenworld: Jos, 2013) 229.

willing to arm themselves or engage in violence and has significant ramifications on prospects for peacebuilding.

73. In a situation as variable and widespread, featuring so many disaggregated actors, and about which there is still a concerning lack of data, the APPG cannot make definitive judgements about the motivations of every group or individual. The drivers of the farmer-herder clashes are complex and need to be addressed if the violence is to be curbed. Religious ideology nevertheless has an important impact. Failure to acknowledge this or to overlook the underlying tensions between religious groups will only serve to limit attempts to reduce violence.

Survivor testimonies

74. The exact death toll is unknown. However, thousands of civilians are thought to have been killed in attacks led by Fulani herders and periodic retaliatory violence. The APPG received numerous reports that Christian pastors and community heads are specifically targeted. Preceding acts of atrocity and/or during many of the attacks, Fulani herders are reported by survivors to have shouted 'Allah u Akbar', 'destroy the infidels' and 'wipe out the infidels'.
75. Many survivors of attacks described the Fulani as dressed in "black uniforms", "black masks", "black robes" or "military attire".¹⁶⁹ Amnesty International's investigation revealed that "People from both farmer and herder communities gave identical descriptions of those who attacked their communities, except for the weapons used."¹⁷⁰ According to reports from Adamawa state: "It is a religious war (...) when they are coming they are shouting 'Allah u Akbar'; they have an Islamic flag and they want to take the land as their own."¹⁷¹
76. Dr Obadiah Mailafia, former deputy Governor of the Nigerian Central Bank and recent Nigerian Presidential Candidate, told the APPG that Fulani herders are using classic principles of Islamic warfare in attacks. He claimed, "the herdsmen militias seem to have complete mastery of the classic weapons of Islamic warfare...They maim and kill men, women and children indiscriminately and in the most gruesome manner imaginable. The idea is that the victims get so frustrated that they would sue for peace -- under any terms."¹⁷² He asserted this "savagery" demonstrates that the violence is being motivated by Islamic ideology.¹⁷³
77. Others submitted evidence to the APPG that before most attacks by Fulani herders, messages are sent to warn the communities of the impending attack. The response received by the APPG was that the content of the messages would usually be "we have attacked (such and such a

¹⁶⁹ CSW, Nigeria: Farmer-Herder Issue, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, 10 June 2019, 4.

¹⁷⁰ Amnesty International, 'Harvest of Death Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders in Nigeria' (Amnesty International, 2018) 17. Available at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF>.

¹⁷¹ CSW, Nigeria: Farmer-Herder Issue, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, 10 June 2019, 4.

¹⁷² Obadiah Mailafia, Religion, Violence and The Herdsmen of The Apocalypse – Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, 1 April 2019, 11.

¹⁷³ Obadiah Mailafia, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, 1 April 2019.

village) and you or your village will be next"¹⁷⁴ or they would be threats such as "your land or your blood".¹⁷⁵ It has been asserted that such warning signals are part of the rules of engagement in an Islamic jihad and thus reveal that these attacks are motivated by religious ideology.¹⁷⁶

Sophisticated Weaponry, Planning and Timing of Attacks

78. Attacks by militias in this conflict have become increasingly well planned, coordinated and brutal. Fulani herder militias have also utilised sophisticated weaponry such as "machine guns and Mark 4 and AK-type rifles", as well as vehicles, such as motorcycles.¹⁷⁷ Farmer militias who have attacked herding communities are typically reported as arriving on foot and being armed with less sophisticated weaponry, such as "cutlasses, spears, bows and arrows, and sometimes Dane guns".¹⁷⁸ It has been argued that this evolution in tactics, as well as the access to superior weaponry, suggests a connection between Fulani herder militias and jihadist groups like Boko Haram. A presentation by Bolaji Omitola from Osun State University which was sent to the APPG asserted that "Recent Operational strategy and tactics of Boko Haram suggest infiltration of the rank and file of the herdsmen by Boko Haram operatives [e.g.] Use of Hilux Jeeps, and motorcycles, setting homes ablaze and shooting of escaping villagers, the use of AK 47 weapons and other assorted weapons."¹⁷⁹
79. This evidence, however, is far from conclusive and there are other explanations for the change in the nature of the violence and the varying access to sophisticated weaponry. Firstly, the significant increase in the price of cattle, combined with the threat of cattle rustling, has incentivised wealthy owners of cattle herds to equip Fulani herders with sophisticated tools to protect their interests.¹⁸⁰ As a result, Okoli and Lenshie write that, "Nowadays, it is common to see Fulani cowboys brazenly armed with sophisticated weapons, such as AK-47s, in the course of their routine grazing."¹⁸¹
80. Moreover, even when Fulani own their herds, the high price of cattle and the low price of guns, means that Fulani are better equipped to sell cows to purchase sophisticated weaponry and

¹⁷⁴ APPG Director Email Correspondence with Rev Canon Hassan John, 7 Jan 2020.

¹⁷⁵ Archbishop Benjamin Kwashi, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, June 2019, 1.

¹⁷⁶ Archbishop Benjamin Kwashi, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, June 2019.

¹⁷⁷ Amnesty International, 'Harvest of Death Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders In Nigeria' (Amnesty International, 2018) 35. Available at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF>.

¹⁷⁸ Amnesty International, 'Harvest of Death Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders In Nigeria' (Amnesty International, 2018) 17. Available at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF>.

¹⁷⁹ Bolaji Omitola, 'Between Boko Haram and Fulani Herdsmen: Organised Crime and Insecurity in Nigeria' Paper Presented at the 5th Institute of Security Studies Conference on Crime and Crime Reduction, 14 and 15 August 2014, Sandton, South Africa. Available at: <https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/5th-Crime-Conf-2014/X002-Bolaji-Omitola.pdf>.

¹⁸⁰ Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, 'Criminality & Reprisal Attacks In Nigeria's Middle Belt' (Search for Common Ground, 2017). Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁸¹ Al Okoli and Nsema Lenshie, 'Nigeria: Nomadic Migrancy and Rural Violence' (2018) Conflict Studies Quarterly 25, 76.

vehicles through the black market than farming communities for whom the purchase of such weapons would require them to sell a prohibitive amount of their crop yields.¹⁸²

81. There is also the issue, discussed in more detail in the earlier section on criminality, that attacks by well-resourced gangs of bandits are sometimes ascribed to Fulani herders.¹⁸³ There are also reports of marginalised Fulani youth being armed by political leaders to cause unrest in the run up to elections.¹⁸⁴ Thus, there are many other reasons why Fulani herders may sometimes be equipped with superior weapons and vehicles.
82. Both farmer and herder groups have organised militias to fight for their interests, attacked at times when targets were most vulnerable, used disguises, coordinated attacks, burned homes and buildings, and committed mass killings.¹⁸⁵ For example, according to Amnesty International, “On 20 November 2017...armed men suspected to be of the Bachama tribe, attacked Shelewol, a Fulani village in Numan LGA, when most of the men were away and killed at least 80 people, majority of whom were women and children”.¹⁸⁶ It is reasonable to expect – though deeply troubling – that in an environment of increasing competition, growing violence, and narratives about ethnic cleansing or religious wars, groups would become more violent and attempt to equip themselves better and to plan their attacks better.

Asymmetrical Casualty Figures

83. The Institute for Economics and Peace published figures in their Global Terrorism Index that so-called “Fulani extremists” are responsible for more deaths than Boko Haram since 2015.¹⁸⁷ However, due to the lack of reliable data about the conflict, exact casualty figures are unavailable. Both Muslim and Christian organisations are reported to have claimed that victims come disproportionately from their community.¹⁸⁸
84. The bulk of the reports presented to the APPG argue that there have been significantly more Christian casualties. CSW for example, “documented 106 attacks on communities in central Nigeria during the first quarter of 2018 alone, which claimed 1061 lives, with seven attacks targeting Fulani herders or communities within the same timeframe, two of them in the south, claiming 61 lives.”¹⁸⁹
85. Better data collection is required to determine accurately the casualty figures. However, all the available evidence suggests that farming communities have suffered significantly more

¹⁸² Archbishop Benjamin Kwashi, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, June 2019.

¹⁸³ Ambassador John Campbell, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Council on Foreign Relations, 13 May 2019.

¹⁸⁴ Fostering Social Cohesion in Nigeria, Conference, Wilton Park, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 26-28 February 2020.

¹⁸⁵ Amnesty International, ‘Harvest of Death Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders In Nigeria’ (Amnesty International, 2018) 11. Available at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF>.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 25.

¹⁸⁷ Serge Stroobants, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Institute for Economics and Peace, 1 April 2019.

¹⁸⁸ Ambassador John Campbell, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Council on Foreign Relations, 13 May 2019.

¹⁸⁹ CSW, Nigeria: Farmer-Herder Issue, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, 10 June 2019, 1.

casualties than herders. The asymmetry is stark and must be acknowledged by commentators and policy makers in their characterisation and narrative of this violence.

Attacks on Places of Worship

86. According to the Christian Association of Nigeria, 500 churches have been destroyed in Benue State since 2011,¹⁹⁰ one of the States worst hit by the conflict. In Taraba State, more than 100 churches were destroyed by Fulani herders in 2014 and over 200 abandoned out of fear of further attacks.¹⁹¹ Approximately 65% of local churches in Wukari were burnt and the entire population displaced.¹⁹²
87. According to Article 8(2)(b)(ix) and (e)(iv) of the Rome Statute to the ICC, “intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes... provided they are not military objectives” constitutes a war crime. This is also clearly recognised in the Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia stating that: “seizure of, destruction or willful damage done to institutions dedicated to religion, charity and education, the arts and sciences, historic monuments and works of art and science.”

Government Failures to Address Violence in the Middle Belt

88. Several academics, NGOs, and international organisations told the APPG that the Nigerian government has failed to 1) protect the communities in the Middle Belt from acts of violence; 2) investigate the crimes adequately or at all; and 3) prosecute the perpetrators.
89. **Failure to Investigate:** World Watch Monitor have recorded cases where attacks against Christians have been investigated and found that casualty figures have been much higher than official reports.¹⁹³ Similarly, the Hosere Citizen’s Rights Initiative accused Christian political figures of doing the same, saying that “when the list of persons killed in Mambilla was published in the newspapers showing about 800 casualties, the state Government denied it, saying not more than 18 people were killed.”¹⁹⁴ Amnesty International investigated this attack and verified at least 141 deaths (though they could not reach certain areas to investigate because of poor roads and insecurity).¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ Madeleine Davies, ‘Attacks on Nigerian Christians Escalate’, Church Times, 6 July 2018. Available at: <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2018/6-july/news/world/attacks-on-nigerian-christians-escalate>.

¹⁹¹ Open Doors International, ‘Crushed but not Defeated’ (February 2016) 16.

¹⁹² World Watch Research, ‘Migration and Violent Conflict in Divided Societies’ 22. Available at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Migration-and-Violent-Conflict-in-Divided-Societies-March-2015-1.pdf>.

¹⁹³ Illia Djadi, ‘Nigerian Christians Refute Claims Herdsmen Killings Were Retaliatory, as Plateau Violence Reaches New Peak’, World Watch Monitor, 28 June 2018. Available at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2018/06/nigerian-christians-refute-claims-herdsmen-killings-were-retaliatory-as-plateau-violence-reaches-new-peak/>.

¹⁹⁴ Hosere Citizens Rights Initiative, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, June 2019, 11.

¹⁹⁵ Amnesty International, ‘Harvest of Death Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders In Nigeria’ (Amnesty International, 2018). Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF>.

90. **Failure to protect:** One source submitted that the Nigerian army “is aware of the location of Fulani training camps in the hills around Kurra Falls up to Riyom Local councils but has failed to take sufficient action.”¹⁹⁶ Others noted concerns such as security personnel taking too long to arrive to farming communities that are under attack, confiscating weapons from those communities and not engaging attackers when they actually do arrive on time to scenes of violence.”¹⁹⁷ Amnesty International reported that, “In responding to the attacks [by Fulani herders] on villages under Numan and Demsa local government areas of Adamawa State on 4 December 2017, the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) deployed an Alpha jet and an EC 135 attack helicopter. Rather than solve the problem, the Air Force only compounded it, as 35 of the 86 victims died from the NAF’s rocket fire”.¹⁹⁸ The air force was accused of targeting the villagers rather than Fulani. The air force denied the claim, although some did admit to ICG that villages had been hit in error.¹⁹⁹ Such attacks and mistreatment by security forces are deeply concerning.
91. Villagers in Taraba State²⁰⁰ and in the North of the country have accused military helicopters of dropping supplies into areas inhabited by Fulani tribes who then attack villages.²⁰¹ Many of these allegations have not been investigated at all.²⁰² The APPG agrees with Amnesty International’s conclusion that cases of failure to protect communities and direct military harassment or violence, combined with an unwillingness to instigate legitimate investigations into allegations of wrong doing, “demonstrate, at least, wilful negligence; at worst, complicity”²⁰³ on the behalf of some in the Nigerian security forces.
92. The failure to protect the communities is further exacerbated by the fact that Christians feel discriminated against and unable to seek redress. For example, President Buhari stated publicly that it is “a political reality” that the constituencies where he received 97 percent of his votes [all located in the north] cannot be treated the same as those who gave him only 5 percent [southeast and south-south].²⁰⁴ He has also made the significant majority of his

¹⁹⁶ Baroness Cox, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, House of Lords, March 2019, 3.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Amnesty International, ‘Harvest of Death Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders In Nigeria’ (Amnesty International, 2018) 61. Available at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF>.

¹⁹⁹ International Crisis Group, ‘Stopping Nigeria’s Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence. Africa Report No. 262’ ICG, 2018. Available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>.

²⁰⁰ Jonathan Ishaku, Herdsman Violence: The Politics of Security Management in A Fragile State, paper presented at a colloquium organised by the Nigeria Union of Journalists, Plateau state chapter at Leadership Institute, Jos, 3 May 2018

²⁰¹ Douglas Murray, ‘Abandoned to Their Fate’, Spectator, 2 February 2017. Available at:
<https://www.spectator.co.uk/2017/02/who-will-protect-nigerias-northern-christians/>.

²⁰² Amnesty International, ‘Harvest of Death Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders In Nigeria’ (Amnesty International, 2018). Available at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF>.

²⁰³ Ibid., 50.

²⁰⁴ YouTube, ‘Buhari: Constituencies That Gave me 97%’, 23 July 2015. Available at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mm_VEkxyiKw.

political appointments Northern Muslims²⁰⁵ and visited sites of bandit attacks in the North West but not sites of farmer-herder violence in the Middle Belt.²⁰⁶

93. The APPG agrees with the Christian Lawyers Fellowship of Nigeria who submitted evidence that appointing Muslims to the vast majority of prominent positions in the federal security apparatus during the insurgency of Boko Haram and violence in the Middle Belt could potentially contravene section 14(3) of the Nigerian Constitution: "The composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few States or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or in any of its agencies."²⁰⁷
94. The APPG recognises that it is the responsibility of the Government to pursue the welfare of all its citizens equally and to do everything that it can to protect the human rights of all and to promote social harmony, rather than prioritising its political base at the cost of more division and conflict.
95. **Failure to Prosecute:** The inability of the Nigerian Federal and State Governments to protect farmers, and the apparent lack of political will to respond adequately to warnings and to bring perpetrators of violence to justice, is clearly very serious and requires investigation. It has also fostered feelings of victimisation and persecution.

Reporting by Local and International Actors

96. Several people told the APPG that reporting about farmer-herder violence is biased or problematic and that this has an impact on the conflict.²⁰⁸ Others told the APPG that problematic mass media reporting exists due to a lack of resources to verify information, an over reliance on second hand reports and limited access to both sides, resulting in what are two-way conflicts, or more than two-way, being represented as one-way violence by herders against farmers.²⁰⁹
97. The difficulty for media in reporting on the conflict was also raised by Ilia Djadi, formerly of Christian news organisation World Watch Monitor, who said that the complexity makes instances of violence difficult to unpack and to report on accurately.²¹⁰ Stephanie Hegarty of the BBC agreed, saying that some media organisations do not have the time or the resources

²⁰⁵ Ambassador John Campbell, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Council on Foreign Relations, 13 May 2019.

²⁰⁶ Jonathan Ishaku, Herdsmen Violence: The Politics of Security Management in A Fragile State, paper presented at a colloquium organised by the Nigeria Union of Journalists, Plateau state chapter at Leadership Institute, Jos, 3 May 2018

²⁰⁷ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria1999. Available at: <http://www.nigeria-law.org/ConstitutionOfTheFederalRepublicOfNigeria.htm>.

²⁰⁸ Archbishop Benjamin Kwashi, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, June 2019, 5.

²⁰⁹ Oliver Owen, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, University of Oxford, 22 November 2018.

²¹⁰ Ilia Djadi, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, World Watch Monitor, 12 December 2018.

to engage with the issues comprehensively, including international media who she described as having a very limited presence in Nigeria.²¹¹ Expanding on this point about the difficulty for media outlets in reporting on the crisis, Dr Momale of FFARN argued that the media generally reports on large cases of violence but rarely has the capacity to investigate the reciprocal smaller scale violence.²¹² Supporting this point, Stephanie Hegarty told the APPG that while in Nigeria, she managed to visit three incidents of violence between farmers and herders to investigate their root causes. In all three cases, what she found was that what initiated the large-scale violence was competition over resources which escalated due to a series of smaller provocations.²¹³ Ilia Djadi also raised concerns about the prevalence of websites and institutions who make claims about the situation without regard to facts or media reporting ethics.²¹⁴ The Abuja Policy Dialogue Series also raised this issue describing “the coverage and reportage of the recent conflicts in the media [as] sensational, unprofessional and unethical.”²¹⁵

98. Beyond these logistical problems, there are some who claim that the media is intentionally biased. For example, the African Studies Centre and the French Institute for Research in Africa argue that “the fear of jihad and a Muslim invasion of the South sell well in Nigerian and International media”.²¹⁶ There are others who argue that the media is biased due to the influence of the Government who want to underplay violence or to attribute it to resource competition so as to not heighten tensions between religious groups.²¹⁷ There are others who say media reporting is biased against Fulani herders, as they are a marginalised community who are often portrayed negatively.²¹⁸ The characterisation of Fulani as a marginalised group was challenged by several sources during the course of the APPG inquiry due to the prominence of Fulani elites in Nigerian society. For example, both political candidates in the 2019 elections were of Fulani origin. In response to this claim, Bulama Bukarti of the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change argued that all Fulani cannot be simply described as one group and that there is a huge difference between wealthy Fulani elites and poor, nomadic Fulani pastoralists.²¹⁹
99. It is beyond the scope of this inquiry to determine whether the Nigerian and international media is biased against Christians or Fulani. However, over the course of the inquiry, the APPG did come across comparatively few local or international news stories reflecting the Fulani herder perspective or describing attacks against them and it was more difficult for the APPG to get evidence from Fulani organisations and representatives. Evidence was predominantly submitted by Christian organisations or affiliates with connections to Christian organisations

²¹¹ Stephanie Hegarty, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, BBC, 12 December 2018.

²¹² Dr Saleh Momale, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Forum on Farmer and Herder Relations in Nigeria, 1 April 2019.

²¹³ Stephanie Hegarty, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, BBC, 12 December 2018.

²¹⁴ Ilia Djadi, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, World Watch Monitor, 12 December 2018.

²¹⁵ Abuja Policy Dialogue Series (Challenges of Pastoralism in Nigeria), Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, January–February 2018, 7.

²¹⁶ Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria* (African Studies Centre: Leiden, 2014) 2.

²¹⁷ Archbishop Benjamin Kwashi, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, June 2019.

²¹⁸ Sian Herbert, Adam Higazi, Oliver Owen, ‘Farmer-Pastoralist Conflicts in Nigeria: A Stakeholder Mapping. Working Paper’ (Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham, 2019) 2.

²¹⁹ Bulama Bukarti, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 12 December 2018.

in Nigeria. Of course, this connection does not mean that the evidence presented by these organisations is incorrect or that reporting is biased, nor is it a criticism of those organisations, who should be praised for championing the rights of their communities, collecting evidence and raising awareness about their suffering. It does, however, suggest the possibility for one-sided understandings of the situation to emerge. An example of this is the reporting around the 2019 decision of the ECOWAS Court of Justice to order the Nigerian Government to investigate the 2016 mass killings and destruction of properties by Fulani Herders in the Agatu Community in Benue State. This ruling was widely reported internationally by Christian sources who claimed that the Court rejected the characterisation of the wider conflict as communal clashes between farmers and herders. Many argued that the decision proves that the violence in the farmer-herder conflict is one-sided against Christians²²⁰, with some even suggesting the ruling legitimises descriptions of herder attacks as ethno-religious cleansing. However, this is not a complete characterisation of the court's ruling. The applicants argued that their community had been attacked by some Fulani herders and that the Nigerian Government had failed in its duty to protect them. The Nigerian Government, in its defence, claimed that because the attacks were based on communal or tribal/ethnic clashes between the Agatu community and the Fulani community over farming and rearing of animals, the Government could not be held responsible. The court rejected this defence, not because it was untrue but because it was irrelevant legally.

100. The court ruled:

"Having been established by admission by the Respondent [The Nigerian Government] that lives were lost and properties destroyed, the Respondent ipso facto admits the violation of its obligation under Articles 1, 2, 4 and 7 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights as claimed. Furthermore, there is no evidence of the effort by the Respondent to promptly arrest the crisis and nip it in the bud or evidence that it carried out prompt investigation to identify the perpetrators, prosecute them and redress the victim. By virtue of Article 1 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Right, to which the Respondent is a signatory, the Respondent is under the obligation to recognize the rights enshrined in the charter and adopt legislative or other measures to give effect to them. In other words, the Respondent is obliged to protect the human rights of its citizens, in the instant case, the Agatu communities as guaranteed under the African Charter and prevent their violations even by private actors."²²¹

101. Thus, once it was established that there had been attacks against the Agatu community causing deaths and the destruction of property, and no attempts to bring perpetrators to justice, the Nigerian Government was responsible for failing to protect them under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The court ruled based on the pertinent legal facts of

²²⁰ Persecution.Org, 'West African Union Court Orders Nigerian Government to Investigate 2016 Killings in Benue', International Christian Concern, 3 August 2018. Available at: <https://www.persecution.org/2019/03/08/west-african-union-court-orders-nigerian-government-investigate-2016-killings-benue/>.

²²¹ The Economic Community of West African States Court of Justice, *Rev. Fr. Solomon Mfa et al. v Federal Republic of Nigeria et al.*, Judgment No. ECW/CCJ/JUD/06/19, 26 February 2019, 29. Available at: http://prod.courtecowas.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/JUD_ECW_CCJ_JUD_06_19.pdf.

the case. It did not rule on whether the term ‘clashes’ was appropriate to describe farmer-herder violence. Nor did it make any ruling in support or rejection of other claims made by the applicants, such as the assertion that the conflict between farmers and herders “has escalated to an invasion and occupation agenda amounting to terrorism” or that “the Fulani herdsmen then took advantage of [Buhari’s] position as President to wreak havoc on the people of Benue state without being apprehended.”²²²

102. Investigators and commentators must not shy away from describing conflicts as being motivated by religious sectarianism when that is the case. The significance of religious-ideological factors should not be diminished nor denied, but those same actors must take into consideration all possible causes and evidence. These actors have the power, and the responsibility, to consider all the available evidence and to report on the conflict in a measured way that promotes peace building.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section will suggest some recommendations for the Nigerian Government, and other domestic and international actors, which can hopefully help ameliorate the conflict. The APPG recognises the unique and significant financial, social and political challenges that the Nigerian State faces and thus does not expect that implementing these recommendations will be easy but hopes that they will be of use to the Nigerian Government in their own plans to reduce conflict.

Humanitarian assistance

1. Over £2 billion of UK bilateral aid was given to Nigeria between 2011 and 2018, an equivalent of £800,000 every day.²²³ However, the APPG has some concerns over how it is spent; and how it might be better spent – especially in relation to the protection of those at risk of attack by Islamist extremists, the need to bring to justice to those responsible for any atrocities and crimes against humanity, and the promotion of community cohesion. It is our hope that this inquiry will point the UK Government towards a far more rigorous and effective use of British resources to ensure that, where money is being spent, it will tackle the plight of minorities, particularly by preventing people from religious minorities from being subjected to discrimination, persecution and even genocide.
 - (i) The UK Government is one of the largest donors to the World Food Programme’s emergency operation in North East Nigeria, which provides cash and food assistance to those who have been displaced. However, according to Government minister Baroness Sugg, the UK “does not currently provide humanitarian assistance in the middle belt states.”²²⁴ There is an urgent need for the UK and its international partners to provide humanitarian support for those displaced by the farmer-herder conflict in Middle Belt States, which is one of the worst-affected regions, including

²²² The Economic Community of West African States Court of Justice, *Rev. Fr. Solomon Mfa et al. v Federal Republic of Nigeria et al.*, Judgment No. ECW/CCJ/JUD/06/19, 26 February 2019, 29. Available at: http://prod.courtecowas.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/JUD_ECW_CCJ_JUD_06_19.pdf.

²²³ Nigeria: Development Aid: Written Question - HL831, 4 February 2020

²²⁴ Department for International Development, Written Answer by Baroness Sugg on 9 March 2020 (HL1991)

protection, shelter, food and healthcare, as well as compensation for those who have suffered losses to their livelihoods and homes. The UK must collaborate with international donors to ensure that all people affected by the violence are provided with adequate relief.

- (ii) International Crisis Group (ICG) estimates that over 300,000 people have been displaced as a result of the farmer-herder conflict.²²⁵ There is an urgent need for compensation for those who have suffered losses to their livelihoods and homes.

Research and Data Collection

2. Competing narratives about the causes of this conflict abound. In order to develop and effectively implement appropriate policy responses to the conflict, it is vital to have a better, shared understanding of the situation. There is also a need to review existing programmes and policies which impact the conflict. Therefore, the Nigerian Government should:

- (i) **Support domestic and international academics, NGOs and journalists, through providing funding and security, to conduct more extensive research and to collect data about attacks.** Better data can help improve policy responses and help develop a shared understanding of the situation. The development of a database from which to determine patterns and early indicators of violence would also be an important step in improving security responses.
- (ii) **Invest in research on constitution, practice, and strategies of criminal gangs and ‘conflict entrepreneurs.’** In this research, the professionalization of herders for hire and their involvement in violent incidents should also be considered.²²⁶
- (iii) **Review the existing structure of cattle routes and reserves.** In concert with state and local governments, the federal government should conduct a comprehensive review of the existing structures providing for cattle routes and reserves to determine which aspects are working and what challenges remain to be addressed.²²⁷
- (iv) **Review the current program on nomadic education.** The federal government should partner with state and local governments to undertake a comprehensive review of the nomadic education program. The process should include extensive participation of representatives from the herder community to ensure it reflects the expectation of herders in terms of timing and the realization of the key objectives of providing quality education and training on modern herding.²²⁸

²²⁵ International Crisis Group, ‘Stopping Nigeria’s Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence. Africa Report No. 262’ (ICG, 2018). Available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>.

²²⁶ Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, ‘Criminality & Reprisal Attacks In Nigeria’s Middle Belt’ (Search for Common Ground, 2017) 8. Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

²²⁷ Chris Kwaja and Bukola Ademola-Adelehin, ‘Between Farmers and Herders Responses To Conflicts Mapping Past Efforts and Opportunities For Violence Prevention’ (Search for Common Ground, 2018). Available at: <https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Responses-to-Conflicts-between-Farmers-and-Herders-in-the-Middle-Belt-FINAL.pdf>.

²²⁸ Ibid.

Planning

3. In order to properly tackle the conflict, there is a need to elaborate and implement a strategy that incorporates all the complex different factors upon which the conflict is predicated. Attempts to deal with contributory factors in isolation will be limited and so holistic plans are needed. Therefore, The Nigerian Government should:

- (i) **Elaborate the National Livestock Transformation Plan.** According to Amnesty International, “The main plan by [the Nigerian] government in relation to permanently addressing the farmers-herders clash, including the socio-economic drivers of the crisis, is the “National Livestock Transformation Plan” (NLTP), announced by the National Economic Council on 19 June 2018. The NLTP is a broad and long-term plan that seeks to solve the herders-farmers crisis as well as develop the livestock sector over a 10-year period. The plan... rests on six pillars: economic investment, conflict resolution, law and order, humanitarian relief, information, education and strategic communication and crosscutting issues.”²²⁹ The Government should support states to implement this plan and ensure that it incorporates all the relevant issues highlighted in this report, such as the preponderance of fake news in Nigeria and existing ethno-religious tensions. The federal government should publicise details of the NLTP and move quickly to put the plan into effect in consenting states.²³⁰
- (ii) **Communicate and consult with stakeholders to ensure buy-in with the NLTP.** This is vital because the Government has had significant problems before with implementing similar plans due to a lack of buy-in. For example, as part of the Government’s Comprehensive Livestock Development Plan, the Central Bank of Nigeria released the sum of N100 billion (nearly USD \$300 million) to the 36 states for the development of grazing reserves as well as cattle routes but, according to the Muslim Public Affairs Centre Nigeria, “no state has been able to construct a ranch, reserve, or address the issue of stock route due to poor commitment to the issue.”²³¹ One of the principal reasons for the rejection of such plans is the feeling among farming communities that they are attempts by the Government to take their land and grant it to herders. One source described the situation to the APPG thusly: “Christian communities see this as an extension of the 18th century Islamic jihad, which sought to take over lands and extend the Sokoto caliphate. It is felt that, rather than bringing perpetrators to justice, the Fulani are being rewarded with government resources, allowing the massacres to continue.”²³² On the other hand, “many herders question the maintenance of vegetation in designated reserves, the ability to manage disease, and [have] security

²²⁹ Amnesty International, ‘Harvest of Death Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders In Nigeria’ (Amnesty International, 2018) 39. Available at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF>.

²³⁰ International Crisis Group, ‘Stopping Nigeria’s Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence. Africa Report No. 262’ ICG, 2018. Available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>.

²³¹ Muslim Public Affairs Centre Nigeria, Written Submission to APPG ForB Inquiry, June 2019, 14.

²³² Baroness Cox, Written Submission to APPG ForB Inquiry, House of Lords, March 2019, 4.

concerns about their vulnerability to attack and theft... There is also resistance to change and a history of government negligence in following through on supportive manoeuvres to develop the cattle industry.²³³ Therefore, any attempts to implement the NLTP will have to involve extensive communication and consultations with both communities and commitment to follow up on agreements. Widespread forums on the prospect of ranching need to be completed at the local and national level, incorporating nomadic education initiatives where appropriate, in order to include the perspectives and experiences of all involved parties.²³⁴

Security and Justice

4. For there to be peace in Nigeria, there must be justice. Thus, to reduce conflict, it is vital to both improve security responses and ensure that perpetrators of violence are held accountable. Therefore, the Nigerian Government should:

- (i) **Investigate, arrest and prosecute those suspected of committing violence as part of this conflict.** The Government must ensure that the trials of individuals or organisations found to have sponsored, participated or been complicit in violence are conducted in accordance with the rule of law and without any delays.²³⁵
- (ii) **Implement programmes in communities to disarm militias.** This should include all militias and vigilantes, not only groups who are easier to access. The Government should also include programmes to manage the grievances of young people serving as foot soldiers in militias and provide them with psychosocial support with the aim of peaceful re-integration into their communities.²³⁶
- (iii) **Ensure the domestication of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons into national law and ensure its full and effective implementation.** The Government can also work with international partners to monitor land borders to curb the inflow of firearms.²³⁷
- (iv) **Investigate and prosecute members of security forces suspected of perpetrating human rights abuses or failing to protect communities.** It is important that an impartial arbitrator is involved in the process and that the process and findings of

²³³ Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, 'Criminality & Reprisal Attacks In Nigeria's Middle Belt' (Search for Common Ground, 2017) 21. Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ International Crisis Group, 'Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence. Africa Report No. 262' ICG, 2018. Available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>.

²³⁶ Chris Kwaja and Bukola Ademola-Adelehin, 'Between Farmers and Herders Responses To Conflicts Mapping Past Efforts and Opportunities For Violence Prevention' (Search for Common Ground, 2018). Available at: <https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Responses-to-Conflicts-between-Farmers-and-Herders-in-the-Middle-Belt-FINAL.pdf>.

²³⁷ International Crisis Group, 'Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence. Africa Report No. 262' ICG, 2018. Available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>.

these investigations are transparent and public, while respecting the safety and rights of witnesses.²³⁸

- (v) **Ensure that community leaders who encourage members of their communities to perpetrate violence are thoroughly, independently and impartially investigated.** Those who are found to have actively incited violence should then be prosecuted.
- (vi) **Deploy more police to affected areas.** Police should also invest in the improvement of local connections to help them gather better intelligence and respond more quickly to early warnings and distress calls.²³⁹ Police forces should include members of the affected communities to help with establishing trust between the communities and police forces.
- (vii) **Collaborate with the international community to improve police training and to ensure police are better equipped.** Police should be equipped and trained on modern policing techniques compatible with international human rights standards, they should have clear and consistent rules of engagement for their conduct which they can be measured against, and they should be taught effective communication techniques with local communities in order to build trust and cooperation.
- (viii) **Collaborate with the Nigerian Army Human Rights Desk to ensure that training on human rights are mandatory parts of military training.** This should include training on protecting freedom of religion or belief.
- (ix) **Incorporate and enforce stringent accountability measures into all areas of the security forces.** As part of this, there should be specific outreach and inclusion of civil society, traditional leaders, and community members to reconcile past grievances and build trust and understanding.²⁴⁰
- (x) **Give serious consideration to the establishment of state-based police, as a supplement to the National Police Service.** Police require deep local knowledge, including local languages, to be effective.²⁴¹ Pre-emptive steps would need to be taken to prevent these state police from being turned into ethnic militias, as has sometimes happened in Borno State in the struggle against Boko Haram.

²³⁸ Amnesty International, 'Harvest of Death Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders In Nigeria' (Amnesty International, 2018). Available at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF>.

²³⁹ International Crisis Group, 'Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence. Africa Report No. 262' ICG, 2018. Available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>.

²⁴⁰ Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, 'Criminality & Reprisal Attacks In Nigeria's Middle Belt' (Search for Common Ground, 2017). Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

²⁴¹ Ambassador John Campbell, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Council on Foreign Relations, 13 May 2019.

- (xi) **Repair access roads leading into vulnerable communities for swift deployment of security forces.**²⁴²
- (xii) **Work with community leaders to communicate to the civilian population the clearly defined mandate of security forces.** This should include clearly outlining the rules of engagement, what communication channels are available and how the public can report complaints and receive information about how complaints are being addressed.²⁴³
- (xiii) **Develop open and transparent channels of communication for traditional, civil, and religious leaders to constructively engage military leaders.**²⁴⁴ Developing means for community leaders to express their concerns and grievances and offer useful information will help build trust and make responses to conflict more effective.
- (xiv) **Invest in inter-agency collaboration between security actors.** This should include members of the military and the police and will help avoid agencies operating at cross-purposes and ensure complementarity and coordination.²⁴⁵

Resource Management

5. As the conflict between farmers and herders is, at its core, a dispute over resources, appropriate resource management is vital to reducing the violence. Therefore, the Nigerian Government should:

- (i) **Implement the NLTP.** Supporting States to deliver the NLTP is critical. If even one State successfully implements the plan and reduces conflict, this will encourage other States to follow suit. Thus far there has been little progress in its implementation, but three States have gone through the first stage of the plan which principally revolves around data collection.²⁴⁶
- (ii) **Ensure that areas designated as grazing reserves, corridors and cattle routes are not encroached upon.** This can include appointing and stationing people at or close to the reserves to make it easy to monitor and manage these areas and prevent encroachment by farmers.²⁴⁷

²⁴² Stefanos Foundation, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, June 2019.

²⁴³ Chris Kwaja and Bukola Ademola-Adelehin, 'Between Farmers and Herders Responses To Conflicts Mapping Past Efforts and Opportunities For Violence Prevention' (Search for Common Ground, 2018). Available at: <https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Responses-to-Conflicts-between-Farmers-and-Herders-in-the-Middle-Belt-FINAL.pdf>.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Chris Kwaja and Bukola Ademola-Adelehin, 'Between Farmers and Herders Responses To Conflicts Mapping Past Efforts and Opportunities For Violence Prevention' (Search for Common Ground, 2018). Available at: <https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Responses-to-Conflicts-between-Farmers-and-Herders-in-the-Middle-Belt-FINAL.pdf>.

²⁴⁶ Fostering Social Cohesion in Nigeria, Conference, Wilton Park, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 26-28 February 2020.

²⁴⁷ Amnesty International, 'Harvest of Death Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders In Nigeria' (Amnesty International, 2018). Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF>.

- (iii) **Reinvest in nomadic education programmes.** According to FFARN, The National Commission for Nomadic Education's programme was "aimed at providing functional and relevant education that will facilitate integrating the nomads into the national life and equipping them to make favourable contributions to the nation's socio-economic development... It was also designed to help the pastoralists modernize their techniques of rearing cattle to maximize their economic potential, including dairy processing and marketing, animal vaccinations, and modern herding techniques." The programme currently suffers from a significant lack of Government funding.²⁴⁸
- (iv) **Invest into the Cattle Supply Chain.** In particular, investment is needed for organised and structured transportation arrangements for either livestock or fresh meat in the local markets. According to SfCG, "it is more lucrative to walk a cow from North to South to sell in the southern market, than it is to slaughter the cow in the North and ship it to the South. Investments in slaughterhouses, refrigerated trucking and railcars, and surrounding livelihood, such as tanneries, can help to mitigate the number of southward migrations. At the same time, it can help in job and infrastructure creation, expansion of distribution networks, and fulfil a demand for high-quality beef and leather goods."²⁴⁹
- (v) **Collaborate with the international community to provide adequate funding for the Great Green Wall Initiative.** According to SfCG, "in response to the economic, political, and security challenges posed by climate variability and environmental degradation, the African Union introduced the Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI) in 2007. The GGWI set out to create 8,000km (nearly 5,000 miles) of trees along the southern Sahel, accompanied by rural development and ecosystem management initiatives, to combat the encroaching desertification of the Sahara Desert. In 2013, the Nigerian government answered the call by establishing the Great Green Wall Agency (GGWA)... The purpose of the GGWA is to create a green shelter-belt (wind-breaking trees), in the front-line states of Borno, Katsina, Kebbi, and Zamfara, to protect the northern part of the country against desert encroachment." Funding is necessary to make sure the GGWA is successful. The GGWA should also expand its mandate to include desertification and climate-affected states such as Kaduna, Nasarawa, Benue and Plateau as part of the geographic scope for the implementation of the initiative."²⁵⁰

²⁴⁸ Chris Kwaja and Bukola Ademola-Adelehin, 'Between Farmers and Herders Responses To Conflicts Mapping Past Efforts and Opportunities For Violence Prevention' (Search for Common Ground, 2018). Available at: <https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Responses-to-Conflicts-between-Farmers-and-Herders-in-the-Middle-Belt-FINAL.pdf>.

²⁴⁹ Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, 'Criminality & Reprisal Attacks In Nigeria's Middle Belt' (Search for Common Ground, 2017) 19. Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

²⁵⁰ Chris Kwaja and Bukola Ademola-Adelehin, 'Between Farmers and Herders Responses To Conflicts Mapping Past Efforts and Opportunities For Violence Prevention' (Search for Common Ground, 2018). Available at: <https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Responses-to-Conflicts-between-Farmers-and-Herders-in-the-Middle-Belt-FINAL.pdf>.

- (vi) **Invest in Green Energy and Reforestation.** Environmental degradation needs to be addressed to help reduce the flow of herders south from the Sahel. One of the greatest sources of desertification in the north is using timber for fire and fuel. The introduction of innovations such as solar power or gas stoves can begin to lessen the impact on the environment.²⁵¹
- (vii) **Work with the international community to provide targeted food and income support together with livestock and crop insurance to smooth losses due to climate change.** The World Bank has already launched a series of initiatives to support pastoralists in the Sahel – the Regional Sahel Pastoralism Support Project, the Regional Investment Program for Livestock and Pastoral Development in Coastal Countries, and the initiative for Pastoralism and Stability in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. Such programmes need to appropriately resourced.²⁵²
- (viii) **Develop and Invest in Nigeria's Domestic Cattle Supply Chain.** Local breeds of cattle are not commercially viable for ranching, as they produce very little milk and poor-quality beef. Local breeds would need to be systematically cross bred with foreign breeds for large-scale ranching to be successful.²⁵³
- (ix) **Reform and freeze enforcement of state anti-grazing legislation.** As mentioned previously, anti-grazing legislation in Benue state had a very negative impact on violence. The Benue state government should freeze enforcement of its law banning open grazing, as Taraba state has already done.²⁵⁴ States should then consult with herders and farmers to find a way to manage resources amicably considering grievances and concerns on both sides.

Peace building and Reconciliation

6. The breakdown of traditional dispute settlement mechanisms is one of the main reasons conflict between herders and farmers has turned from disagreement to violence. Therefore, a process of reconciliation between groups, to open dialogue and de-escalate tensions back to peaceful disagreement is crucial. Attempts to reduce conflict without sufficient regard to this process, as well as the long lasting and heightened ethnic and religious tensions that exist within Nigeria, will be significantly limited. Thankfully, the evidence shows that peace building and reconciliation programmes that do consider these issues have had a positive impact on conflict levels. Therefore, the Nigerian Government should:

²⁵¹ Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, 'Criminality & Reprisal Attacks In Nigeria's Middle Belt' (Search for Common Ground, 2017) 20. Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

²⁵² Robert Muggah and José Luengo Cabrera, 'The Sahel is Engulfed by Violence. Climate Change, Food Insecurity and Extremists are Largely to Blame,' World Economic Forum, 23 Jan 2019. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/all-the-warning-signs-are-showing-in-the-sahel-we-must-act-now/>.

²⁵³ Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, 'Criminality & Reprisal Attacks In Nigeria's Middle Belt' (Search for Common Ground, 2017). Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

²⁵⁴ International Crisis Group, 'Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence. Africa Report No. 262' ICG, 2018. Available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>.

- (i) **Foster dialogue between herders and farmers.** This should be done by strengthening mechanisms already existing at state and local levels.²⁵⁵ Institutions for reconciliation should be embedded into as many facets of Nigerian society, and at as many levels, as possible.²⁵⁶ This is crucial because dialogue between communities and religious groups does take place in Nigeria, but usually at a very high level. It is vital that these discussions incorporate everyday people, particularly women and young people who are rarely included in talks. Moreover, talks should also revolve around specific issues in order to see better results e.g. working with religious leaders to agree herding routes in communities.²⁵⁷ However, such reconciliation mechanisms should not replace justice, but work in parallel with aid courts.
- (ii) **Work closely with religious leaders to promote interreligious dialogue and reconciliation.** Religious identity tensions are an important factor in the conflict and must be addressed if there is to be peace. Religious leaders can play an important role in influencing their communities to engage in dialogue and reconciliation processes and therefore can play a vital role in reducing violence.
- (iii) **Work with NGOs to provide technical and financial assistance to traditional and community leaders in order to strengthen their mediation and non-violent conflict management skills.** Since traditional and community leaders are often the first line of support called upon in times of violence, equipping them with conflict management skills can help de-escalate conflicts when they emerge.²⁵⁸
- (iv) **Work with NGOs to provide capacity development for farmer and herder associations.** This can help these groups to play a more positive role in the reconciliation process.²⁵⁹
- (v) **Bring religious, traditional and community Leaders together to address misconceptions and create a shared understanding of conflict.**
- (vi) **Incorporate traditional leaders into decision-making and dispute handling roles.** This is important as traditional rulers hold considerable influence among members of their tribes, in many cases even more than local government authorities.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁵ International Crisis Group, 'Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence. Africa Report No. 262' ICG, 2018. Available at: <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>.

²⁵⁶ The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Church of England, 3 December 2018.

²⁵⁷ Fostering Social Cohesion in Nigeria, Conference, Wilton Park, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 26-28 February 2020.

²⁵⁸ Chris Kwaja and Bukola Ademola-Adelehin, 'Between Farmers and Herders Responses To Conflicts Mapping Past Efforts and Opportunities For Violence Prevention' (Search for Common Ground, 2018). Available at: <https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Responses-to-Conflicts-between-Farmers-and-Herders-in-the-Middle-Belt-FINAL.pdf>.

²⁵⁹ Abuja Policy Dialogue Series (Challenges of Pastoralism in Nigeria), Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, January-February 2018.

²⁶⁰ Chom Bagu and Katie Smith, 'Criminality & Reprisal Attacks In Nigeria's Middle Belt' (Search for Common Ground, 2017). Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Criminality-Reprisal-Attack_FINAL.pdf.

- (vii) **Work with communal leaders to denounce violence unequivocally and step up support for local dialogue.**
- (viii) **Identify and support NGOs who are successfully running reconciliation programmes.**
Helping to scale-up programmes which have already proven to be successful can be an effective way to peace-build while lowering the risk associated with starting new initiatives. A good example of this is the Peace Accord signed in Adamawa State in December 2019, which was the result of the work of a local NGO, the British Council and farmer and herder leaders.²⁶¹
- (ix) **Collaborate with state and local governments, NGOs and Communal Leaders to build up alternatives to military responses to conflict which utilise dialogue and mediation as de-escalation techniques with the conflicting parties.**

Media and Misinformation/False Information

7. Linked to improving research and data collection, improving the standard of investigation and reporting by media actors is vital to improving the public and the international community's understanding of the conflict. Moreover, for communities to accept policy responses, there must be a shared understanding of what are the causes of the problem. Therefore, the Nigerian Government should:

- (i) **Collaborate with major news media outlets to provide investigative, as well as conflict sensitivity training for media professionals and other influential communicators such as Government Public Relations Officers.** It is also important to reinforce the importance of journalistic standards, ethics and codes of conduct.²⁶²
- (ii) **Encourage collaboration between media outlets, academics and NGOs to help communicate data about the conflict to the public.** Often those researching the conflict or working with affected communities do not have the capacity to communicate accurate data about the conflict to the wider public and this helps create an environment in which misinformation can thrive. The Government can use its influence to help convene actors to convey accurate data to the public.
- (iii) **Review the Nigeria Press Council Act with a view to changing its name and expanding its mandate.** It should be called "the Nigeria Media Council" with its mandate expanded to cover traditional, electronic and social media.²⁶³
- (iv) **Enforce the Cybercrimes Act and other hate speech laws.** Nigeria should use its existing legislation to challenge those who incite violence towards other communities online, but this should not be utilised to stifle legitimate free speech.

²⁶¹ International Organisation for Peace and Social Justice, 'PSJ Hails the Adamawa Peace Accord', 16 Dec 2019. Available at: <https://psjuk.org/psj-hails-the-adamawa-peace-accord/>.

²⁶² Abuja Policy Dialogue Series (Challenges of Pastoralism in Nigeria), Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, January-February 2018.

²⁶³ Ibid.

The Government should work with human rights experts and the international community to determine what speech is considered incitement to violence in line with international human rights standards.

- (v) **Encourage Social Media Companies to introduce, and publicly announce, new steps to counter the spread of misinformation in Nigeria.** Steps could include employing more fact checkers and restricting the number of times messages and videos can be forwarded automatically. Other possible actions include making sure that the original source and dates of photos must be stamped on all photos shared through social media.
- (vi) **Encourage construction of positive and balanced narratives through TV and other mass media.** Long-term support should be provided for creative writers in Nollywood, Kannywood, and radio and television to create new narratives showing how interaction between various ethnic and religious groups can be peaceful and mutually beneficial.

Education

8. Education that promotes human rights for all and respect for the other is key to long-term peace in Nigeria. Therefore, the Government should:

- (i) **Collaborate with Local and State Governments, Community Leaders, Schools and NGOs to provide education that promotes religious coexistence and respect for the other.** To maintain peace in the long run, there is a need to cultivate more resilient societies in which people understand how interaction between various ethnic and religious groups can be peaceful and mutually beneficial. Therefore, education which promotes the value of the other and the dignity of difference is crucial.²⁶⁴
- (ii) **Collaborate with Local and State Governments, Community Leaders, Schools and NGOs to provide basic media literacy education to communities.** People must be made aware about the preponderance of misinformation in Nigeria, and how they can be unintentionally exacerbating conflict through sharing videos and posts.
- (iii) **Collaborate with Local and State Governments, Community Leaders, Schools and NGOs to provide citizenship classes.** These classes can be used to promote nation building and the sense of a collective Nigerian identity over ethnic, religious or other divisions.
- (iv) **Develop a College of Leadership.** Developing a dedicated educational institution where potential leaders from many different ethnic, religious and other backgrounds can interact daily and improve their leadership skills and relationships can help to

²⁶⁴ The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Testimony to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Church of England, 3 Dec 2018

improve leadership capacity in the long run in Nigeria and to reduce tensions between communities.

The UK and the International Community

9. Her Majesty's Government and the International Community also have a vital role to play in preventing violence, not only for Nigeria's benefit, but for the benefit of the entire region. Therefore, the international community should:

- (i) **Recognise that the conflict is complex and multi-faceted.**
- (ii) **Develop an international consortium to conduct independent research into the conflict.** Donors should fund NGOs, academics and other investigators to carry out research to improve understanding of the conflict. This is vital to developing appropriate policy responses.
- (iii) **Encourage the Nigerian Government, bilaterally and multilaterally, to implement the NLTP and offer financial, technical and capacity building support to implement the recommendations of this report.** Representatives from the British Government and International Community should use all avenues available to continually encourage the Nigerian Government to take more decisive action to address the violence. They should also assess the above recommendations to determine where they can offer support, e.g. with training for security personnel.
- (iv) **Provide financial support and capacity building training for State Governments to help them better manage resources and conflict and to implement the recommendations of this report.** This could include training and exchange programs for governors, senior civil servants, and members of state assemblies.²⁶⁵
- (v) **Provide support for people displaced by the violence.** Funding is desperately needed to provide adequate relief for the many survivors of farmer-herder violence.
- (vi) **Encourage the Nigerian Government and Nigerian Parliamentarians, bilaterally and multilaterally, to actively engage with the Middle Belt.** For example, there should be regular presidential visits to the region.²⁶⁶
- (vii) **Demand full investigation of cases of military complicity in violence and human rights abuses.** This is key to establishing trust between communities and security forces but also to maintaining respect for human rights.
- (viii) **Identify NGOs who are running effective reconciliation programmes and provide them with funding and capacity building.** Helping to scale-up programmes which

²⁶⁵ Ambassador John Campbell, Written Submission to APPG FoRB Inquiry, Council on Foreign Relations, 13 May 2019.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

have already proven to be successful can be an effective way to peace-build while lowering the risk associated with starting new initiatives.

- (ix) **Provide international officials working in Nigeria with training in religious literacy and freedom of religion or belief.** This training should be more than simply teaching officials about religions. It should also endow officials with a deep understanding of how religion affects politics and conflict and what steps they can take to promote freedom of religion or belief.
- (x) **Hold an extraordinary session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government to deliberate on the farmers-herders clashes in the region, including Nigeria.** The aim of this session should be to find a meaningful and durable solution to the problem by supporting accountability mechanisms to ensure suspected perpetrators are brought to justice.²⁶⁷
- (xi) **Support civil society organizations to monitor and document all cases of human rights violations against the civilian population.** Efforts should be made to ensure that the Nigerian National Human Rights Commission and other relevant institutions, both national and international, take appropriate steps to ensure compliance to International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law by the military while conducting internal security operations.²⁶⁸
- (xii) **International actors at the African Union (AU), and United Nations (UN), should negotiate and agree upon actions to address root causes of environmental degradation and desertification across the region.**

²⁶⁷ Amnesty International, 'Harvest of Death Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders in Nigeria' (Amnesty International, 2018) 11. Available at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF>.

²⁶⁸ Chris Kwaja and Bukola Ademola-Adelehin, 'Between Farmers and Herders Responses to Conflicts Mapping Past Efforts and Opportunities For Violence Prevention' (Search for Common Ground, 2018). Available at: <https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Responses-to-Conflicts-between-Farmers-and-Herders-in-the-Middle-Belt-FINAL.pdf>.

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Group for International
Freedom of Religion or Belief

