

Appendix 69:
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This is A Moral Issue, A National Issue, An Election Issue!

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I read with utmost disgust, the detailed news reports of the gruesome and needless murder of one Ms. Oluwatoyin Olusesan. And with equal disgust, and disdain, that I regard the deafening national silence over this complete disregard for the sanctity of human life, by some, especially, in the name of religion!

This gruesome murder of Ms. Oluwatoyin Olusesan is a national issue! An urgent national issue at that! This moral issue, this national issue is imbued with high impact on nation and what becomes of our national unity. The Nigeria that I want, the Nigeria that we should all crave, is the Nigeria, where life is sacred, all lives! Whether the life in question is that of a nonbeliever, or the life of a Muslim, a Christian or be it the life of an Animist or Pagan!

What happened to Ms. Oluwatoyin Olusesan is a hate crime! It was murder, a murder committed against someone, based the religious affiliation of such person, in this case, the deceased Ms. Oluwatoyin Olusesan. There should be no place for such lunacy in Nigeria!

A Nigeria of any stripe, any religion, any region of origin, or state or ethnicity, any Nigerian should be free, should feel free, to travel, be resident and be employed in any and all parts of our great country!

Religious and ethnically motivated murders, have become too frequent in their occurrence and irritating regularity!

I am a believer of one, united great Nigeria. But the question must now be asked, at what cost would we have a one Nigeria? Especially, when some Nigerians think nothing of the lives of other Nigerians, as they constitute themselves into the judges, juries and executioners rolled into one?

The questions must be asked, do Nigerians have right to travel and hold employment everywhere in Nigeria, regardless of region, religion, state and ethnic origins and or, with fear of death, based on indigene-settler dichotomies? Can Nigerians, all Nigerians, feel safe in travel, resident and employment across the length and breadth of Nigeria, without fear of being hacked to death solely because, and on the basis alone, that such a Nigerian is a Muslim or Christian or

other? Must the value of a Nigeria life, be predicated on her/his difference?

Why does being different translate to death sentence or worthless life of one Nigerian over the other?

I am a Nigerian, proud of my Nigerian-ness, but do I have a right to be different? Must I be a cultural and religious replica of my place of resident or employment? Why must a Nigerian be murdered by fellow Nigerians because she/he is different culturally or religiously or linguistically? Why?

Do Nigerians have right to traverse every nook and cranny of Nigeria without fear of being lynched by some other Nigerians?

I am in favor of all religions as I am equally against all religions, when and if, religions and its illogical fervors become inimical to Nigeria's national interests! Nigeria is more important to me, than, ANY religion! OK, Nigeria is my religion!

I am glad that Dr. Abati wrote about this and a good portion of Dr. Abati's excellent article is excerpted below; but, I really wish that MORE Nigerian journalists are writing about this and commenting about this senseless and religiously motivated murder of a fellow human being, a fellow Nigerian, who was guiltless!

When is the firebrand Colonel Dangiwa Umar going to comment about this? Or when is he going to be asked by Nigerian journalists? Where are the usual noisemakers? Why are they neglecting to comment on this all-important national issue? It requires thinking? Or it is not sexy or jumping on the bandwagon easy-stuff?

AND, when are Nigerian journalists going to be asking the presidential candidates questions about Ms. Oluwatoyin Olusesan's senseless murder!

I have had cause in the past to write a commentary, titled, Nigerian Citizenship Should be Redefined ([read](#)) This is a MORAL issue, this is a NATIONAL issue! This calls for national debate, this is ought to become part of our national issues for candidates jostling for elective offices!

In Case You Missed It, Here is a portion of Dr. Reuben Abati's excellent article, excerpted for brevity:

The following is taken from the pages of The Punch newspaper of Thursday, March 22, 2007: "Muslim pupils at a secondary school in

Gandu, Gombe state, beat a teacher to death after accusing her of desecrating the Koran. According to agency reports, the teacher, Oluwatoyin Olusesan, a Christian, was invigilating an Islamic Religious Knowledge exam at the Government Day Secondary School, Gandu when the incident occurred. The students attacked her outside the school compound after the exam and killed her. They also burnt some of the school blocks in the process.

The Vice Principal, Hajiya Hadiza Gombe said the teacher, who was employed on contract was assigned to invigilate the SS1 pupils who were writing their Islamic Religious Knowledge exams. She added that the teacher suspected that a foul play was about to take place when one of the students wanted to come in with his books to the exam hall. Gombe said when the teacher collected the books and threw them outside, unknown to her, there was a copy of the Holy Quoran among the books. The principal said before they knew what was happening, the students had started chanting Allahu Akbar (God is Great). All efforts to control the rampaging students proved abortive even when the school principal, Mohammed Sadiq, tried to protect the teacher in his office. The principal was also terribly beaten and injured while they set the teacher's car, three classes, the school's clinic, administrative block and library on fire..."

I think that the least that can be done is to close down this school permanently and throw away the keys. The students behind this act of savagery should be identified, and made to face the full wrath of the law: these are not students, they are something else, something unnamable, and the society that has produced this level of criminality at the level of a secondary school is truly an unfortunate society. That this is the character of young persons in certain parts of the country is lamentable. These are children who are in their teens, and probably as young as 11; we have every cause to worry about the future. Ms Olusesan was doing her duty as a teacher.

Examination malpractice is the bane of the education sector in Nigeria. She had no intention whatsoever to desecrate any religion, she merely wanted to protect the integrity of the examination that she had been asked to invigilate. She wanted to stop one of the pupils from cheating. But her own pupils, over whom she stands in principle in loco parentis turned against her and the school system and wreaked havoc.

There was no one prompting them, no mallam or imam in the background giving them any instructions, they acted out of their own volition as products of a peculiar socialization process in Nigeria, within the framework of which anyone who speaks a different tongue

or belongs to another faith, is seen as an outsider, as an enemy to be exterminated at the slightest provocation. What was played out in that incident in Gombe is the terrible story of Nigeria.

Coming a few days after a group of mad men, the supporters of Alhaji Hashidu Abubakar stormed an open court in session and inflicted injuries on the Chief Magistrate, just because they did not want the Magistrate to remand their leader in prison custody, this episode confirms the suspicion that Gombe state has effectively become a theatre of anarchy. It is a shame that there is a government in place there. And if we may add, this is yet another proof that we are not yet a nation.

Ms Olusesan is a contract staff: this is something that happens in many Northern states: on account of an indigenization drive which is really an act of temporocentrism, and discrimination, workers from other parts of the country who seek employment in the Northern states, as civil servants, are recruited as contract staff. They are regarded as outsiders and yet the Nigerian Constitution forbids any form of discrimination against all citizens, in every part of Nigeria. This is a problem with the Nigerian state: the fact that depending on the circumstances a citizen with bona fide rights under the Constitution could become a non-citizen, as in the ethnic crisis in Plateau state, the inter-ethnic conflicts in Ife/Modakeke, Aguleri/Umuleri, the Tiv/Jukun conflict, and all such examples in which a combination of ethnic and sectarian violence has placed a question mark on the Nigerian arrangement.

The crisis did not begin today; the children of Gombe are the great grandchildren of this phenomenon. The conversion of religion into a vehicle for violence takes at least three main forms in the Nigerian context: an intra-religion form, an inter-religion form and the mixture of religion and state politics, but it is the second category that has been most felt.

There was for example a religious dimension to the Nigerian civil war of 1967 -70, with the killing of Igbos who are mainly Christians in the Moslem North, and the declaration of secession by Igbos under the umbrella of the Republic of Biafra, in 1980, there was yet another clash between Moslems and Christians in Kano, again in Maiduguri in 1981, in Gombe in 1983, in Yola in 1984, Kafanchan in 1985, University of Ibadan in 1986, Kaduna in 1987, Kano and Bauchi in 1991, Zango Kataf and Bauchi in 1992, Funtua in 1992, Kano in 1994, Kaduna in 2000, Jos in 2001, Abuja in 2002, Numan, Adamawa in 2003, Maiduguri, Kano, Bauchi, and Onitsha in 2006. Common to all these instances of Christian-Moslem is needless

rivalry, a clear advertisement of religious intolerance and complete disregard for human rights, and a total abandonment of all the original teachings of the religions about love and peace

In 1994, a Moslem sect engaged a group of Egungun worshippers in a bloody fight on the streets of Lagos. In 1998, Moslem youths attacked the Moremi shrine in Offa, Kwara state; in Bariga, Lagos, fanatical Moslem youths stopped a masquerade from passing through Ayoka street where a mosque is located. In 2001, an Oro cult festival in Sagamu was defied by the Moslem Hausa-Fulani residents, resulting in a temporary spread of anomie. In September 2005, the sleepy town of Iwo, Osun state became a theatre of war when a group of Moslems called Tahun took on the community's masquerade cult in open combat.

Often the reasons for the orgy of religious violence may seem rather strange and implausible: in 1986, the University of Ibadan community was divided between Moslem and Christian academics over the location of a cross in front of the Chapel of Resurrection.

In 2002, Moslems opposed plans to host the Miss World Beauty pageant in Nigeria and a certain reference to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in an article in ThisDay newspaper written by a young reporter Isioma Daniel. There was also the famous Gideon Akaluka case. Akaluka was murdered, like Ms Olusesan because he was said to have desecrated the Holy Quran; in Lagos, Idi Araba, a Lagos suburb exploded because a Yoruba man allegedly urinated close to a Fulani mosque.

In 2000, disagreements over the introduction of the Sharia as a criminal orthodoxy also resulted in killings, and in 2006, a controversy in Europe involving the publication of certain cartoons about the Prophet (SAW) in a Danish newspaper, Jyllands-Posten led to an orgy of killings in parts of Nigeria. The same year, students of two Higher Institutions: Obafemi Awolowo University and the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro staged a religious drama of their own which resulted in the disruption of public peace.

In the former, a group of Moslem students attacked other students who were said to have been watching a pornographic film, what followed was an open fight in which dangerous weapons were freely employed.

In Ilaro, Christian students attacked female students wearing the Moslem hijab; Moslem students quickly formed themselves into an army and organized reprisal attacks.

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