

NAI NEWSLETTER

17 June 2004

WITH FOCUS ON NIGERIA

NIGERIA: RELIGIOUS CONFLICT OR THE CITIZENSHIP QUESTION?

On May 18, 2004, Nigeria's President Obasanjo declared a State of Emergency in Plateau state in Central Nigeria following the massacre of hundreds of Hausa Muslims in Yelwa town by suspected Christian militia allegedly in retaliation for an earlier attack in March, when suspected Muslim militants killed some Christians that had taken refuge in a church. The Yelwa killings had immediately led to the escalation of tension in Northern Nigeria where the Muslim majority felt aggrieved, and in the case of Kano, attacked and killed Christians, mostly Southerners, living in the city. The President's suspension of the elected governor as well as legislature of Plateau state under the laws of the Emergency has led to protests from Christian groups, the opposition parties and the human rights community across Nigeria.

While the President acted within Section 305 of the 1999 Constitution, and was later backed by the National Assembly, the action has been contested and condemned by opposition parties and civil society as being highhanded and unconstitutional since "the country was not at war". Since Nigeria's return to democracy in May 1999, there has been an escalation in communal conflicts over resources and power between those who consider themselves indigenes (and the legitimate owners) and those they see as settlers (outsiders, non-owners). Ethnic, communal and religious identities have been mobilized by various factions of the political elite to forcefully exclude those Nigerians who have settled outside of their place of origin over hundreds of years ago, by other 'indigenous' Nigerians who discriminate against them as 'outsiders'. The conflicts are further complicated where the so-called settlers are ethnic or religious minorities. Against the background of dwindling national resources, poverty and rising expectations, what appears as religious conflict in reality masks a deeper struggle for power and resources, in which competing groups deploy identity to include the insiders, discriminate against or exclude others who are also Nigerians. This reflects the fundamental nature of the unresolved citizenship question in Nigeria, which continues to express itself in episodic outbursts of violent conflict and instability. The challenge therefore is for the citizenship question to be urgently addressed and resolved in a democratic and equitable manner.

FURTHER READING:

Jibrin Ibrahim: *The Citizenship Question in Nigeria: indigenes versus settlers*, June 2004.

Jibrin Ibrahim and Toure Kazah-Toure: "Ethno-religious Conflicts in Northern Nigeria" in *News from the Nordic Africa Institute*, May 2004.
<http://www.nai.uu.se/newsfromnai/ibrahim-touresve.html>

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Beckman is a specialist on Nigeria.

USEFUL WEBSITES:

<http://www.crp.org.ng/main.htm>

Constitutional Rights Project works to ensure that Nigeria's legislation conforms with international human rights standards.

<http://www.nigeria-law.org/ConstitutionOfTheFederalRepublicOfNigeria.htm>

Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999

<http://www.aapeaceworks.org/>

Academic Associates PeaceWorks (AAPW) is working in Nigeria and West Africa in the areas of conflict management and peace education.

A small selection of African news services and Nigerian newspapers online which carry useful information on current politics in the country.

<http://allafrica.com>

<http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/nigeria.htm>

www.nigeria.com

<http://www.nigerianworld.com>

A Guide to Africa on the Internet: Nigeria information sources

<http://www.nai.uu.se/links/country/westafrica.html#Nigeria>

USEFUL NAI LIBRARY RESOURCES:

<http://www.nai.uu.se/bibl/bibleng.html>

Monographs:

Ethno-religious Conflicts and Democracy in Nigeria: challenges. Ed. by Etannibi E.O. Alemika & Festus Okoye. Kaduna, Nigeria: Human Rights Monitor, 2002. 330 p.

Community Conflicts in Nigeria: management, resolution and transformation. Ed. By Onigu Otite & Isaac Olawale Albert. Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1999. 378 p.

Journal articles:

Idowu, William O. O., "Citizenship, alienation and conflict in Nigeria", in: *Africa Development*, 24: 1/2, 1999, 31–55. Abstract available online.

<http://www.ajol.info/viewarticle.php?jid=127&id=6979&layout=abstract>

William, Wunmi, "Citizenship questions and environmental crisis in the Niger Delta: a critical reflection", in: *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 11:3, 2002, 377–392. Available online as a pdf-file. <http://www.njas.helsinki.fi/>

RELEVANT NAI PUBLICATIONS

<http://www.nai.uu.se/webbshop/ShopSE/index.html>

The Institute has published more than 20 books on Nigeria. Some are accessible online.

PREVIOUS NAI NEWSLETTER OF CURRENT INTEREST

NAI NEWSLETTER January 2004 with focus on Sudan and Uganda

<http://www.nai.uu.se/media/newslettersve.html>

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