ARMED BANDITRY IN ADARALAND: A STUDY OF HUMANITARIAN CRISIS AND THE PLIGHT OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

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ABSTRACT
This article titled "Armed Banditry in Adaraland: A Study of Humanitarian Crisis and the Plight of the Internally Displaced Persons" dissects incidences of banditry and the experiences of the internally displaced persons in Adaraland. It explores the level of displacement of persons in various villages and the numbers of people who ran away as seen on the field through extensive research carried out in the affected areas. The research shows, in relative detail, the villages affected by the activities of banditry and the plight of the deprived persons. The study finds, among other things, that banditry in these areas was a ploy to destabilise Adaraland and open it up to occupation by non-Adara people. The paper uses oral interview as primary sources of data collection by meeting people who were directly affected or witnessed the events. The study concludes that the media has down played the level of destruction of lives and properties in Adaraland, through under reporting and inadequate publicity as against similar attacks/happenings in other areas of Kaduna State facing similar menace.

Introduction

This paper examines humanitarian crisis and the plight of the internally displaced persons from Armed Banditry in Adaraland. Before going further, it is therefore, important to undertake an in-depth exploration of the notion of humanitarian crisis deployed in this study. Humanitarian crisis which is often referred to as "humanitarian disaster" is defined as a singular event or a series of events that are threatening in terms of health, safety or well-being of a community or large group of people. It may be an internal or external conflict and usually occurs throughout a vast expanse of land. This form of disaster calls for immediate response by local, national and international partners. There are diverse kinds of humanitarian crises and each is caused by different factors. As a result, each requires unique response. This response depends on the level of damage – whether it is short- term or long –term damage. Humanitarian crisis ranges from natural disasters, man – made disasters or complex emergencies. This, by implication, means that complex emergencies occur as a result of several factors or events that

prevent a large group of people from accessing their fundamental needs such as food, clean water, safe shelter, education, freedom of worship among other things.

As explained earlier, there are diverse kinds of humanitarian crisis which are caused by different factors. The concern of this study is with the one caused by armed conflicts or armed banditry. The violent armed conflicts happen with serious and attendant consequences on the lives and properties of people. The result of this is this unfortunate situation that leaves many as refugees, internally Displaced persons and, in the context of this study, a high -level displacement seeing within Kaduna state.

The Russian-Ukrainian example will further help in situating Humanitarian Crisis as a global phenomenon. The Russian war on Ukraine is bridging the gap of insecurity seen in Europe since the Second World War. The Russian attacks on Ukraine are not only causing serious humanitarian crises in Ukraine but are also affecting the whole of Europe. An estimated population of Refugees of 18,217,000, flee into neighbouring countries of Poland, Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Moldova, leaving the country shattered by artillery bombardment and large- scale displacement and separation of families within the country. This has created a picture of serious humanitarian crisis and, invariably, means that a large amount of money is required to rebuild the country and resettle citizens. This does not include the refugee crisis in Syria which has seen its citizens loitering the borders of Europe making risky journeys on the Mediterranean Sea and the refugee situations around the US / Mexican border mostly from Southern Americans countries.

In the context of Africa, the Libyan crisis has continued since the Arab spring in 2011, leaving the country under warring war-lords even after series of negotiation by the UN has woefully failed. These warlords exploit the resources from Libya to get arms from the black market to execute their agenda. They also create more problem for arms and ammunition control in the Sahel region. Moreso, the situation in the former single country now divided into South-Sudan and Sudan is quite worrisome. The internal rivalries between the main ethnic groups in the South-Sudan is still a tensed one, with sometimes pockets of clashes that leave many deaths affecting humanitarian access and aids. Although after the ousting of the sit-tight dictator Al-Bashir, Sudan (Khartoum) has now recently descended to statelessness cum fragility due to intense rivalry between factional generals in charge of large formations of personnel and weapons for the control of Khartoum, this conflict has led to the death of 9,430 people, and has displaced over 13,500,000 people as IDPs. The result of this crisis is the exile of many Sudanese from the country many of whom are roaming the borders of Chad. This experience has birthed fears of the prevalence of the Libyan experience in the Horn of Africa, West Africa and the Sahelian region in terms of large cache of arms and ammunitions in getting into wrong hands. This fear informs the concern of this study on the humanitarian crisis in Adaraland.

This Seminar looks at the issue of insecurity caused by the activities of Fulani herdsmen/bandits/armed militia that has become a topical issue in North-West Nigeria. This Banditry has led to the death and displacement of thousands of people and the consequent introduction of the ransom payment introduced by these elements in Adaraland. The area has made headlines in several news media for experiencing one of the worst attacks and unfortunate death of its indigenous people. Unfortunately, many of such attacks were under reported. It is on this account that the present study brings out the coordinated humanitarian crisis experienced in the land. This is done to bridge this gap by presenting a near factual picture of the incidents as reported by indigent victims of the carnage. The study shows, in clear term, the level of displacement of people in Adaraland.

The Proliferation of Armed Banditry in Adaraland

It is important to begin by asking these pertinent questions: what is/banditry and who are the bandits? In the context of Nigeria, bandits are a group of self-styled, guerrilla-killer herdsmen, Fulani militias or Fulani armed men that introduced killing spree like no other comparable only to the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. The modus operandi of these killer groups involves the use of motorcycles with three people on each one storming communities at night their hundreds or more and ambushing their victims in such inhuman manner. They, in the process, kill able bodied men and kidnap humans who they consider as their gold mine for ransom.

The activities of these Fulani killer herdsmen, Fulani militias or Fulani armed bandits started as farmers and herders clashes at the initial stage and eventually reached the extent that they do not only revenge supposed maltreatment meted out on them by farmers but took over communities in Adaraland. At the height of their activities, the bandits surrounded and took over parts of Adaraland by cutting off the link between Kajuru, and Kachia Local Government Areas which make up the Adara Chiefdom.

The activities of bandits reached a worrisome level that they did not only attack villages, communities and towns but educational institutions. During the period under review they attacked and kidnapped more than 800 students in Government Science Secondary School Kankara, The Bethel Baptist School, Federal College of Agricultural Mechanizations and the Greenfield University. These examples demonstrate the danger bandits posed to the area and how they have metamorphosed into a deadly group. According to a BBC Hausa reporter, these armed groups display of terror reached the heights that the Governments of Kaduna, Zamfara and Katsina States could not use the state security apparatus any more to challenge them but rather appealed to them to accept mouth-watering amnesty on the terms of the armed group to cease their destructive activities on these States. More so, they patrolled communities considered as frontline in some Local Government Areas imposing levies and collecting same from farmers/vulnerable members of the communities. In some cases, they compelled some farmers to pay ransom to either avoid attacks or for permission to access their farmlands before harvesting their farm produce. Reports have it that these killer Fulani herdsmen, Fulani militias or Fulani armed bandits have extended their territories outside North- West, and North-Central Nigeria known as their theatre of operations down to South-Western and South-Eastern parts of the country with pockets of killings and abduction cum kidnappings.

Southern Kaduna in general and Adaraland in particular have had terrible experiences of the activities of banditry. Within Southern Kaduna, Kajuru and parts of Kachia Local Government Areas are considered to be the frontline- areas for bandits. The banditry in Kajuru; a suburban settlement in Adaraland began by the end of December 2015. Although the crises in this community has several historical root causes. What began as farmers/herders clashes which the government, print, and electronic media presented at the initial stage, transformed into a full blown conflict that claimed many lives. Some reports have it that the situation started with the armed confrontation in Maro (a farming community known as the most fertile in Adaraland) between a Fulani community and the indigenous Adara speaking people. The crisis was primarily traced to an illegal trespassing on farmlands and settlements by the former through their route of North-South annual movements/migration. As the banditry persisted, several lives were lost, properties destroyed and people were displaced. The alarming incident reached a point where dialogue failed at all levels. There was a gradual transition from a face-to - face confrontation to guerrilla warfare which led to the attack on many indigent communities. Despite these, none of the culprits have been brought to justice. The state government have deployed blame-game narrations to justify the attacks which has boosted the morale of the attackers. Governor Nasir Ahmed El Rufai, in explaining the reason for the attacks affirmed that the attacks on Southern Kaduna ethnic groups (which Adara people are included) was was a response to the attacks by the communities of Southern Kaduna on the Fulani during the post-election crises in 2011. Thus, the governor went further to advance that it was a debt incurred by the people of Southern Kaduna.

This overt support for these killer herdsmen by government of the day created the foundation for subsequent campaign against other people by the Fulani ethnic group after any form of perceive grievance and even the resuscitation of age long bitterness. For instance, after the 2011 elections, a band of pastoral Fulanis who were moving from Bauchi through Plateau State via Oagworok (Kagoro) coincidentally met with the clashes of the 2011 post-elections violence in Southern Kaduna. They felt threatened by the youth mobilized in these areas and so in their quest to disperse these young men, resorted to exchange of gun shots which led to the death of over three persons at the spot. Giving the already tensed atmosphere, the community mobilized themselves and launched a reprisal attack against the killer Fulani men who lost over thirty people with their herds of cattle dispersed and killed by the rampaging youth. This became the new norm whenever the Fulani ethnic group are questioned over their over-bearing tendencies on villages /communities where they either reside or travelled along. These attackers storm

villages and communities at night shooting sporadically and killing people unchallenged, those that were not killed by gun shots were either hacked to death with machetes or stabbed with knives and left to die from severe injuries. The activities of the dreaded Fulani attackers led to the death of over 4,320 people in Adaraland and displacements of 321,314 persons

The Impact of Banditry and the Displacements on Adaraland

As the research has enumerated earlier, that Adaraland comprises two local governments areas of namely: Kajuru Local Government and Kachia Local Government. They comprised of several other ethnic populations. Kachia local government housed the Stool of Agwom Adara, with historical and archeological evidences found. The level of displacements of communities will be examined local government after another, taking it to ward level and then the village stead.

Kachia Local Government Area

The villages under Kachia Local Government where the villagers are displaced and their villages deserted as a result of the activities of these dreaded armed Fulani militia/bandits/herdsmen are;

(i) Doka Council Ward

Some villages under Doka Council Ward were overrun by armed wielding Bandits on Feb 9,2016. The operation lasted for over three weeks. They continually attacked the villages and retreated into nearby forests at will until the last village was burnt down.

The first villages attacked on February 9, 2016 include Chikwale, Idum, Muruchi, Kwasau Legede, Kafeyawa and Amale. On getting to Chikwale Unguwan Pa, they met strong resistance by some youths who organised themselves but because they were using superior machine guns they overcame them and moved to Gidan Sambo, then to Gidan Para, Unguwan Muruchi, Unguwan Dutse, Baware kasa, Gidan Duna and made a final onslaught on Sabon. This attack left some gory images of man's inhumanity to man. The attackers used machetes, knives and daggers to chop their victims to death. Other villages such as Gida Duna, Opase, Gidan Sunday, Gidan Yarima, Gidan Auta, Bakin Garma, Gidan Ladan, Maigari, Gidan Wakili, Pago, Oshowodo and Gidan Peter were weakened by the experiences of other nearby villages and offered no resistance especially that such villages had more youths to mobilize in their defence than them.

(ii) Ankuwa Council Ward

On Sunday 15 September 2016, the villages within this council ward experienced movement of large number of bandits around the Ankwuwa axis. However, Ungwan Pah was the only village attacked which led to the displacement of locals largely because the village is isolated from other villages nearby.

(iii) Bishini Council Ward

The rate of attack on Koron, Ungwan Gwari and Kurmin Iya villages of Bishini Council Ward was so severe. This is because the villages are on the route where these bandits mobilize men and resources to their hideouts. These villages share borders with Niger State.

(iv) Kateri Council Ward

Rishi is the only village that came under attacked in this council ward. The attack that happened on Thursday 20 October 2016 saw many villagers displaced into Doka main town. Although there was no significant incidence during the attack, the villagers chose to remain in Doka as IDPs for the fear of the bandits. Most of the IDPs are now residing in the General Hospital, and in the Junior Secondary School, Doka.

Kajuru Local Government Area

Kajuru Local Government Area have also witnessed devastating attacks of these dreaded Fulani militias or Fulani armed bandits. The contestation over the local governments site of power between the indigenous Adara people and the Hausa/Fulani settler groups have dated back to over forty years. More so, what gives the attacks in Kajuru villages and in other parts of Adaraland the coloration of ethnic cleansing, is the brutality with which they are executed their crime. They will storm into indigenous Adara people's villages not only to kill but also to destroy every of their possession. While they do so, Hausa/Fulani settlements remain untouched.

Most times, the attackers will pass through these Hausa/Fulani settlements to perpetuate these attacks without any threat to the settlers whatsoever.

(i) Kallah Council Ward

The villages attacked in Kallah Council Ward include Kihoro-Libere, Bakin Kogi, Umiko,Magunguna, Idazo, Ungwan , Galadima, Ungwan Guza, Etiss, Ungwan Ma'aji, Ungwan Dantata, Ungwan Araha 1 & 2. These attacks occurred many times between March 21-April 2017. After the Adara Development Association and the Southern Kaduna Peoples Union called for a national rescue of their people, the bandits retreated to their hideouts in the forests bordering Laduga and the route to Saminaka. On the early morning of October 16 ,2017, Ungwan Goshi, Ungwan Shaban, Ungwan Jibo, Ungwan Maijama'a, Ungwan Sako, Ungwan Maidoki and Ungwan Masaba came under fierce attacks. The media reported the happenings three days after the attack. The bandits razed telecommunication mast, electricity installations and cut down big logs of wood to block the major access roads which, they knew, the security forces might use to locate them via the Kachia – Ungwan Maidoki road.

The paper notes that on 1st June, 2021, a few men from Idazo, Ungwan Shaba and Magunguna villages took risks and went back to clear their farmsland, after it was established that the occupying armed herdsmen have left. Unfortunately, they went missing and were never seen or heard of to this day. This was the fate of past attempts to return to the village which were met with death.

(ii) Tantatu Council Ward

On 28 June, 2018 Ungwan Makware was the only village attacked where people were displaced as a result. The attack was to destroy the only major feeder telecommunication mast located in the village. This mast covers the adjoining lowland villages of Magunguna Mai Albarka.

(iii) Idon Council Ward

The villages under Idon council ward that came under attack are Edanu, Ungwan Mudi, Ungwan Rana, Ifele and Ungwan Gora. This attack which occurred on Friday 23 January 2019 was the last experienced within Kajuru Local Government Area. The bandits intentionally left these villages because they compelled them to give them food stuffs and other items such as yams, beans, goats and cows. In addition to this, they spared them because they have fertile land for animal husbandry and cattle breeding. Before emergence of banditry these villages were known for having the largest pastural incursions for cattle breeding and less of crop farming. These incessant attacks made herders and other large cattle breeders to run away and leave large stray cattle wandering the large expanse of land.

The activities of the dreaded bandits on Adaraland have left scores of villages displaced, their farmland disserted and their livelihood abandoned. The aftermath of this activities is the proliferation of IDPs in Adaraland and several other camps in Southern Kaduna, and other parts of the state. According to reports the IDPs from Adaraland have occupied six major camps. This distribution can be seen below;

Kachia Baptist camp by NASI (a Nigerian Army) has over 26,340 IDPs leaving by the former site of this military formation who ran away from identified wards of Kallah and Tantatu wards of Kajuru Local government and settled in this camp in Kachia town.

Doka Camp: This camp has over 19,670 officially registered IDPs who are mostly from villages under Doka, Ankuwa and Bishini council wards.

Gonin Gora by Assemblies of God Camp Ground: this camp has non -resident IDPs because the people are scattered in parts of Gonin Gora especially in unoccupied houses, dilapidated buildings and schools. They only converge thrice a day to get food, supplies and medical attentions. The number of registered IDPs in this camp is 14,256 persons.

Maraban Kajuru SOKAPU Camp: this is the most populated IDP camp in Adaraland. Record has it that the camp hosts well over 128,900 persons most of whom are women and children. This camp still maintains such number as these people are still afraid of returning to their villages.

Those in these IDP camps receive supports from religious organisations, SOKAPU, RADI and other aids agencies with no support from the Kaduna State Government, KADSEMA, NEMA or any agencies of the Federal Government of

Nigeria. This has often generated debate on the intentions of the state government on the armed banditry in Adaraland. The failure of the Responsibility to Protect as it relates to Adaraland in spite of incessant attacks, and displacement of the indigenous Adara people and reoccupation of their villages by these bandits implies a ploy to take over this land through the instrumentality of banditry.

It is a fact that nobody chooses to be displaced from their homeland but for situations beyond one's control. During any violent conflict, war or crisis, women, children and the elderly suffer the most. This is so because they constitute large populations of the vulnerable group in society. The attackers sacked indigenous Adara people of the above category from their villages and communities between 15 November 2015 when the first organised banditry attacks took place at Maro and Fadan Ashi (Rijana) villages to December 2020 which is the period that this research covers. Most of these sacked villages enumerated above are either occupied by these dreaded attackers or resided by Fulanis that were pastoralised around these indigenous people. Some of the villages/communities taken over by these elements such as Koron, Ungwan Gwari and Kurmin Iya have become haven for kidnapped victims of these armed dreaded Fulani attackers. This is because these places are border towns which are not only in the hinterlands but also serve as strategic towns for their activities. These facts are drawn from reports by ransom takers, victims of the kidnapped student of the Greenfield University and other emanating sources such as residents who at the Kasuwan Magani market attest that they saw some Fulani people wearing their clothes and even riding their abandoned motor- cycle while they were escaping from an attack at Kallah village. When they drew the attention of the securities agencies, the criminal elements ran away.

Plights of these Internally Displaced Persons in Adaraland

The victims of violent conflicts are usually not the cause of the conflict as these persons are caught in between the conflict. Conflict, crises and violence know not one status, race, ideological background and sex. This situation brought out an imagery of people who have lost everything that they have laboured for years painstakingly. Some IDPs interviewed in the course of this study described how they were made to watch their loved ones killed. The children and parents interviewed attested that they were made to watch their loved ones killed in cold blood by the dreaded Fulani armed men. This brings out the brutal manner with which these bandits operate. Some IDPs in trying to run away from their attacked villages and communities fell victims to snakes bites leading to loss of lives and deformation due to the venom.

A group of informants also mentioned that some of them who ran away from their communities live in bushes, some in opened field, which left them exposed to other forms of danger such as bites from snakes, mosquitoes and other harmful insects. Some that were fortunate ran into neighbouring communities and were harboured in schools, churches, which are more safer than their former place.

Many women are made widows with children to feed in this deprived condition where their houses are burnt and displaced with nothing to support them. According to report over 73,400 children are out of school, because of insecurity. Schools in such communities are either shutdown or closed between 2016 to 2022 when the bandits attacks and siege intensified. Furthermore, the old ones among them were abandoned and as a result, are either killed or lost their care givers to the attackers. Those who survived are left unattended to and at the mercy of village scouters and good spirited individuals.

Most of the IDPs are expose to severe hunger. They are, as a result, traumatized and some died of starvation. There are instances where the IDPs do not even get one ration of food in a day. This state of severe hunger has led many children to malnutrition and suffer from kwashiorkor and few others die because of malnutrition.

In addition to these, most of the Adara populations were isolated and inaccessible the result of which is the prevalent food security situation Adaraland and Southern Kaduna is faced with today. These people who once lived in plenty are now reduced to a beggarly state due to the activities of these bandits.

There are reports that the activities of these armed bandits have led to the displacement 234,567 people living in IDP camps and other host communities in Adaraland. Most of these people have no access to safer water supply.

According to an informant, they are left without basic amenities, since most of them have lost their homes and are in another place. Most of them practice opened defection, which is posing another health risks to them. They have inadequate access to clean water for drinking talk more of bathing.

Conclusion

The activities of banditry in Adaraland have been under reported in both the print and electronic media. As a result of this they have been neglected by the State and Federal government and other donor agencies responsible for humanitarian assistance. The armed Fulani organized banditry left thousands of indigenous Adara people death, displaced thousands of people are thrown out of their ancestral homes. They bare reduced to sleeping in tents which are later infiltrated by bad elements and also their attackers who sneak in to further torment them. These internally displaced persons have become strangers in other places facing severe hardship, with no one to assist them.

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