

FROM *MAITATSINE* TO *BOKO-HARAM* AND BEYOND: A REQUISITE TO VET THE PROPOSED HATE SPEECH BILL FOR MUSLIMS' UNITY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract

Not news again but only a matter of necessity to say that Nigeria lost innumerable lives and properties through the activities cum crisis of *Maitatsine* between 1980 and 1985. Greater magnitude of loss has continued to be recorded since uprising of *Jama'ah Ahl as-Sunnah li ad-Da'wah wa al-Jihad (Boko-Haram)* in 2002. In between the two disastrous unrests, there are on record similar ones that shared causes, identity and implications with the duo. They are considered as residual from the spark created by the former. These included Kano crises of 1982, 1991 and 1995. These subsequent Kano crises are attributed to *Maitatsine* because the bulk of *Maitatsine* crises took place in Kano. The most disastrous crisis since disappearance of *Maitatsine* is that of *Boko Haram*. Beyond *Boko Haram* still, are evolving ones in different parts of Nigeria which if not curbed may result to fresh catastrophes. It is observed that the destructive contribution made by both blasphemies from non-Muslims and unguarded utterances from the supposed Muslim preachers in the origin of each of the examined insurgences is enormous. This study which is descriptive and adopted contents analysis method found that the Islamic injunctions on best methodology for a Muslim preacher demands that it must be one that ensures achievement of the *Da'wah* objectives without any detriment to Muslims' unity and/or National security. It is on this basis that this paper, with Islamic eyes, views the proposed Federal Government Hate speech bill which is claimed to regulate all religious and tribal agitations in the country to enhance peaceful coexistence. It is therefore a part of this paper's recommendation that Muslim scholars advocate for an introduction of preaching control in Nigeria to eschew such utterances that disunite the Muslims and/or endanger dear lives and properties of Nigerian citizens.

Introduction

Among Allah's blessings upon man is that He made him a thoughtful and sane being and created a tongue for him. He made him able to utter sounds and clarify what he wants through the words which he speaks. He has only to speak to let people know what he wants (www.radioislam.org.za). Human tongue may be described as the most powerful organ by the power of what it utters. Words can inspire and words can destroy. Words can make or break a nation and can accelerate or kill a generation (<https://www.inc.com/peter.../26-brilliant-quotes-on-the-super-power-of-words>: 30/10/17) In this vein, provocative utterances in the guise of religion have dealt a great blow to Nigeria through several religious tension and crises. In some cases the utterances in question were blasphemy from mischievous non-Muslims while in other cases they are inciting statements from supposed Muslim preachers as reaction to a “blasphemy” or an “unacceptable” government policy. The enormity of the danger in inflammatory statement reflects in the warning expressed by Nasr bn. Sayār Al-Kanāny (d.131 A.H), a poet during the Umayyad period of Islamic history. Al-Kanāny sent the poem to Caliph Mirwān bn. Muhammad, calling his attention to what Kharijite (*Khawārij*)’s provocative utterances in the land could lead to. He says:

أرى تحت الرماد وميض جمر .. ويوشك أن يكون له ضرام
فإن النار بالعودين تُذكى .. وإن الحرب مبدؤها كلام
فإن لم يطفها عقلاء قوم .. يكون وقودها جثث وهام
فقلت من التعجب ليت شعري .. أيقاظ أمية أم نيام
(<https://shaydzmi.wordpress.com> 30/10/17)

An interpretation that is close to meaning of the above:

I see under the ashes a blinking ember (burning coal)
And it is feared that it results to tribulation
For the fire in (between) two rods is a reminder
And the beginning of war is (always in) word
If the sensible people do not put it (the fire) off,
Its fuel would be dead bodies and (essential) materials
Then, I said from curiosity though poetical
Are the people awake or asleep?

The focus of this work is to firstly drive home the fact that in the history of Nigerian religious crises, provocative utterances always take a lead among other causes. Nigeria has a long history

of religious conflicts, some of the most virulent being those of the *Maitatsine* and *Boko Haram*. Record also has it that between 1985 which marked end to the *Maitatsine* crises and 2002 in which emergence of *Boko Haram* was witnessed, there were many violent crises though less popular to the two most disastrous ones, especially in Kano which was the base of *Maitatsine*. In an attempt to do this, the work shall be constructed under five subheadings excluding the introduction and conclusion. The subheading shall be: *Maitatsine* religious crises and effects of Heresy, Aftermath of *Maitatsine* in Kano: Menace of Provocative utterances, *Boko Haram* and Beyond: the Danger of Hate Speech, The Proposed Hate Speech Bill: Islamic perspective and lastly, Recommendation to the Muslims on Reaction to Blasphemy.

***Maitatsine* Religious Crises and Effects of Heresy**

Maitatsine is the name of a religious fanatics group which erupted in Northern parts of Nigeria. It is one of the names by which the leader of the group was known. His real name was Muhammadu Marwa. His aliases include: Muhammadu Arab, Muhammadu *Mai Tabsiri*, Muhammadu Marwa *Darka* and Muhammadu Allah *Tatsine*. Abdul Fattah Olayiwola (2007:127) asserts that the name *Maitatsine* evolved from the Hausa word *Tatsine* which Marwa was frequently repeating during his preaching session. Muhammadu Marwa would talk about things that his group believes in and to those who do not believe in the same, he would say “*Allah tatsine*” meaning: ‘May Allah’s curse be upon them (Report of Tribunal, item 67:12) For this reason, he and his group were identified as *Maitatsine* i.e ‘the one who curses’ and less commonly, as *Allah Tatsine* i.e one who uses Allah to curse. It is not on record that the group at any point rejected the appellations.

Muhammadu Marwa, the controversial Islamic preacher in Nigeria was said to have originally come from Marwa in northern Cameroon. (Lubeck, 1985:369) After his education, he moved to Kano, Nigeria in about 1945 (Report of Tribunal, item 67:29). He became known for his controversial preaching on the Qur’ān. *Maitatsine* claimed to be a prophet and saw himself as a *mujaddid* or reformer in the image of Sheikh Usman dan Fodio. (Niels, 1989: 84). Although a Qur’ānic scholar, he seemingly rejected the hadith and the sunnah while he regarded the reading of any other book other than the Qur’ān as paganism. *Maitatsine* spoke against the use of radios, watches, bicycles, cars and the possession of more money than immediately needed. In 1979, he even rejected the prophethood of Muhammad and portrayed himself as *annabi* (prophet) and

was so believed by his followers. (Niels, 1989: 86) His followers dared not talk anything negative about him anywhere; not even in the privacy of their homes. They believed that anything said about him anywhere in the globe is heard by him. (Olayiwola: 2007:128)

In addition to the heresy uttered by *Maitatsine* as described above, he was also allegedly involved in un-Islamic practices like the use of human organs for the manufacture of charms and drinking human blood (Adesoji, 2011:101). This is underscored by the group's mysterious power in defending selves and attacking their Preys. The followers confiscated people's houses at will to establish their base. Their hold on the enclave became so strong that they began to harass non-member neighbours many of whom fled the area for dear life. The group's ability to withstand and survive police sporadic attacks on them conceited them into believing in their invulnerability and immunity against human attack of any sort. (Olayiwola: 2007:128). This lend more credence to the allegation of their being fetish as obtainable in paganism.

The Devastation experienced in the *Maitatsine* uprising cannot be overestimated. Its first major religious violence in Kano took place between December 18 and 29, 1980. It was triggered off by members of the *Maitatsine* sect. In this attack, *Maitatsine* unleashed a three-day riot in which 4,200 people were killed, mostly Muslims (Boer, 2003:39). The purpose as claimed by the group was to reform Muslim worship and to cleanse Islam from its many non-Muslim accretions. (Tell, 28/10/91:3)

Another riot took place in October 1982, when the sect killed some 400 people in Maiduguri and destroyed much property. (Boer, 2003:39). In the same month, uprising also took place in Rigassa, Kaduna state and, again, in Kano where many lives were also lost. (News watch, 6/5/91:16)

In February 1984, *Maitatsine* struck in Jimeta, Yola, where 763 people were killed and almost 6000 were displaced. (Boer, 2003:39) In 1985, the same sect killed over 100 people in ten hours of fighting in Gombe (Newswatch, 6/5/91:16). However, there are many reports on *Maitatsine*. While some are similar to the above others have little differences. For instance, a summary of Abimbola O. Adesoji's Report (in Africa Today, 2001:98) says: In 1980, the first in the chain of *Maitatsine* riots broke out in Kano. Others occurred in 1982 in Kaduna and Bulumkutu, 1984 in Yola, and 1985 in Bauchi (see also Ibrahim 1997:511)

It is germane here to note that partial outbreaks were also reported in Plateau, Bauchi, and parts of Kaduna State. Again, the Police had to resort to the use of deadly ammunition before those rioters were subdued. Each of the outbreaks of violence caused by *Maitatsine* led to loss of hundreds or thousands of lives. Properties worth millions of naira were also vandalized. Alas, it had all happened as a result of heresy in the utterances of *Maitatsine*.

Aftermath of *Maitatsine* in Kano: Menace of Provocative utterances

The precedent of *Maitatsine* and the level at which the crisis had abused people's minds suggest the existence of crisis friendly atmosphere and a similitude of gunpowder waiting for a little spark, to encourage recurrence. This happened in many parts of northern Nigeria, predominantly Kano state. This explains why recurrence of crisis in Kano is examined in this section to represent other violent uprisings between the exit of *Maitatsine* and emergence of *Boko Haram* in a bid to underscore the fact that genesis of every crisis always involves certain unpleasant utterances.

Kano Riot 1982

This riot sprang up when the Anglican Archbishop Canterbury visited Fagge, Kano city to lay the foundation of a church very close to the area's mosque (Boer, 2003:39). The riot which evolved between some Muslim youth and the church was so tense that about forty-four people were killed (Kuka, 1993: 154)

It is relevant to recall that Sokoto Jihad which started in 1804 was extended to Kano in 1807. (Olawale, 1997: 112) This fact presupposes the existence of *Masājid* or mosques in every part of Kano City from time immemorial. Not only the disapproval of the motive behind the construction of the church many years after the *Masjid* has been existing, the extreme proximity of the Church to the Mosque did not go down well with many Muslims. Some Muslim youth around the area felt the need to make a protest to avoid anything that may lead to religious crisis as a result of the Church's plan. However, these Muslim youths were made more seriously infuriated by the statement uttered by some Christians who were stakeholders in the Church. The Church referred to the protest as irrational and that the Church in question, St. George's Anglican Church, predated the existence of any mosque in the area and that what was only about to happen was expansion of the Church. Another report of the provocative utterances of the

Church members is expressed by Jan H. Boer, “To fully appreciate the irrationality of this protest, you must know that that Church had been there...” (2003:40) Naming the peaceful exercise of the Muslim youth an irrational act was understood to be tantamount to “do your worse” and in deeper view, blasphemy. Hence, it led to loss of lives as reported above.

Kano Riot, 1991

The front headline of Tell magazine of October 29, 1991 screams “*Bloodbath in Kano: Religious Fanatics Strike Again.*” The major cause of this uprising was the blasphemy attributed to the visit of the Christian Evangelist Reinhard Bonke from Germany. (Boer, 2003:41) It was around 10 a.m., that Muslim youths marched to the Emir’s palace, protesting the presence of the invited evangelist. According to the protesters, Bonke was already known for blasphemous utterances against Islam and personality of Prophet Muhammad. (SAW) Why the protest continued, the state government who had not responded to the application received from CAN asking for the use of the Race Course for the use of Bonke’s one-week crusade cautioned the CAN by asking her to hold the crusade in one of the Churches. (Tell, 29/10/91)

By Sunday, October 13, when Bonke arrived in Kano, the activities of the organizers remained unchanging and the tension had grown higher. The riot lasted two days, leaving more than 200 people dead and hundreds injured. With the series of attacks and counter-attacks, the crisis was escalated; the destruction had been massive and far-reaching. Corpses littered the areas. Building materials worth millions of naira were destroyed. At Airport Road, a big Mobil filling station was burnt and 16 vehicles were burnt and about three nearby filling stations were burnt. About 20 churches and mosques were also burnt including a Mosque at Emir Road. (Boer, 2003:42)

While accounting for the causes and magnitude of the destruction, it should be registered that the peaceful protest against an anticipated blasphemy grew big and became uncontrollable as the organizers bombarded the Kano City with radio and television adverts as well as bill boards. It was glaring that CAN in Kano gave the Bonke crusade widely suspected publicity, much more than for previous events and several thousands of posters were pasted around Kano city. Some of the posters, according to Mukhtar (1992: 17), carried the captions ‘Jesus for all by the year 2000’, “the anointed man of God is coming to deliver sinners and unbelievers to Jesus Christ” (Tell, 29/10/91). In a typical Muslim dominated City like Kano, these statements were not only

blasphemous but also abusive, provocative and confrontational; otherwise, one must be ready to answer the questions; who were the sinners and who were the unbelievers?

Kano Riot, 1994/1995

The year 1995 started while the atmosphere in Kano had been tense. According to various sources, a clash took place in December 1994, when Gedeon Akaluka, a Christian of the Ibo ethnic group, devastatingly desecrated and mutilated copy of the Qur'ān and displayed some pages he had used as toilet papers. (Africa No 1 Radio 13 Feb. 1995) It was also reported that he did not deny the fact that he allegedly ordered his wife to use some pages as paper pad for her baby. (Boer, 2003:46) In Islamic faith, to publicly boast of having done this is blasphemy of a higher order. It is not enough to say that the Muslims accused Gedeon Akuluka of insulting Islam and in fact it is mischievous for any reporter to pretend not knowing the status of the Qur'ān to the Muslims. In the crisis that followed this, Akuluka who was neither remorseful of his blasphemous utterances and action nor vindicated or called to order by the CAN, was killed in the mid of the tension created by himself. (The Guardian 3 June 1995)

Provocative statements were also at the center of the press reports surrounding the clashes that broke out in May 1995 between Muslims and Christians in the northern city of Kano (Country Reports 1995 1996:208). Sources reported that the clashes started following an utterance during a minor dispute between a Muslim Hausa and a Christian Ibo over a tip for car parking (Reuters 3 June 1995). Another report has it that it had all started with an item stolen from the car of a Hausa woman and a nasty comment made by an Igbo woman. By and large, it could not have led to any serious riot if caution had been taken in people's utterances. According to Kano CAN Chairman as reported by Jan H. Boer (2003:47) "Like most of the others, it took only a spark to set it off, an irrelevant spark that really had nothing to do with any Christian-Muslim issues". He said while describing genesis of this crisis.

Country Reports (1995) states that the clashes resulted in scores of deaths and the partial destruction of the city's central market (1996: 208), while other sources reported that over 25 persons were killed. (Reuters 31 May 1995) According to Boer (Ibid), the state government put the number of casualties at three. Military sources gave a figure of "over twenty-three"; CAN "over sixty"; Murtala Hospital reported "about 200". To conclude this segment, it is instructive

to give another example of provocative and inciting statement of one Samuel Uche who is reported by Boer (2003:49) to have said:

I must tell you that Sabon Gari is not an easy field to swallow. As small as we are, there is nothing we don't have... This Sabon Gari can face the whole of Kano State... But any day they (the Muslim indigenes) attempt to come into this area, nobody in Kano will be safe. The Emir, the Governor, the police, nobody will be safe. I don't want to tell you how but it will happen, we're prepared.

***Boko-Haram* and Beyond: the Danger of Hate Speech**

Boko-Haram is a combination of two words 'Boko' and 'Haram'. *Boko* is a Hausa word derived from English noun 'Book'. *Boko* is a term in the Hausa language that is generally used to describe any book, knowledge, activity or culture that is related to the West. When a Hausa man is particular about Western education, he says *ilmin-boko*. On the other hand, *Haram* is a word that has its origin from the Arabic language and it simply means unlawful or prohibited in both Arabic and Hausa languages. Apparently, the compound name *Boko-Haram* means 'western way of life is unlawful', probably in the life of a Muslim. (Mustapha, 2014:14) In this paper, *Boko-Haram* refers to *Jama'ah Ahl as-Sunnah Li ad-Da'Wah Wa al-Jihad*, a group founded by Muhammad Yusuf around 2002 in Northern Nigeria.

Ustaz Muhammad Yusuf as he was popularly called was born on January 29, 1970 in Girgir Village, Jakusko Local Government Area of Yobe State. He had four wives and twelve children. Not much is known about his educational pursuit. Details about this confusion are explained in the work of Mustapha (2014:41). In 2002, Muhammad Yusuf founded the group that would eventually become known as *Boko Haram* with its official name *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad* which in English means "people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad" and was its spiritual leader until he was killed in

2009.(Mustapha,2014:42) Yusuf made his heresy and inciting utterances by preaching against Western education and consistently argued that the current system in Nigeria symbolized by government, needed to be overthrown and replaced with an extreme version of Islamic law. Just like *Maitatsine* as discussed earlier, Yusuf was also hostile to other Muslims who disagreed with his methods and beliefs. He was soon regarded as an oddity by the rest of Muslims and media profile of its group became popularly known as *Boko Haram*, meaning “Western education is unlawful” in English language. The group operated from its Maiduguri base under various sobriquets. It consistently showed aversion to ‘Boko’ or Western education. (Leadership, 31/7/2009: 4)

One must say that *Boko Haram* standpoint on Western Education is not new in Northern Nigeria. There was the perception in Muslim-north that since Western education (*Boko*) came to the area through Christian missionaries, Muslim children going to the schools shall be converted to Christianity. Many northerners, especially Muslim scholars in the olden days would deny their children access to Western schools. They would make the children to stand by their homes and chant the derogatory songs composed to discourage every school – going child not to go to school by singing what is narrated in Daily Trust (3/8/ 2009: 2) as:

*‘Yan Makaranta Bokoko
Bakaratu ba Sallah
Ba’ a biyar hanyar Allah
Sai yawan zagin Malam.*

The interpretation of the song is:

Children of Western schools,
You neither study nor pray,
You don’t follow God’s path,
You only abuse your teacher.

However, *Boko Haram* sacrilege was beyond condemnation of Western education; the inciting nature of its utterances was unprecedented. The movement is equally opposed to working in the public sector. They organized themselves into a structured command with Muhammad Yusuf as the commander-in-chief otherwise known as the *Amirul Aam*. There are two deputies to him addressed as *Na'ib Amirul-Aam* 1 and 2. The state commands have their *Amir* or commander, just as each Local Government Area has its own *Amir*. At all different levels the followers constitute the subjects. They are equally structured to perform the multiple roles of the soldiers, police and so on. (Mustapha, 2014: 49)

Another set of Hate speech of the *Boko Haram* was on Sunday 14th June, 2009 when Muhammad Yusuf, the *Boko Haram* sect leader threatened, while addressing his followers over an arrest made against some members (see Mustapha, 2014 for details) that his group will carry out reprisal attack. He was quoted as saying “what I said previously that we are going to be attacked by the authorities has manifested itself therefore, we will not agree with this kind of humiliation, we are ready to die together with our brothers and we would never concede to non-belief in Allah.”(Mustapha, 2014: 71)

The embattled Muslim group called *Boko Haram* was thought to have been vanquished in 2009, when the Nigeria military crushed its Maiduguri headquarter and mosque into concrete shards and its leader was arrested and killed in police custody. But about a year later, Maiduguri and surrounding villages again began living in fear of the group. The fear at the moment in all the Northern states of Nigeria including the Federal Capital Territory is of the sect's attacks. Every one fears the group whose members have murdered a handful of police, local, Muslim clerics and politicians among others. The group has engineered massive prison breaks and has claimed responsibility for bombing lots of important public places. The most disastrous bombing

orchestrated by the group is that of the United Nation's Building, situated in Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory on 26th August 2011 which made the international bodies to declare *Boko Haram* a terrorist organization.(Mustapha, 2014: 79)

Here is the list of some of the devastating activities attributed to *Boko Haram* sect between the death of its leader and its tenth year of existence as reported in the work of Uthman Mohammed Mustapha (2014: 79-84)

Friday, July 2, 2010 – Police Corporal Mohammed Yahaya of the Gwange Divisional Police was attacked and killed by three unknown gunmen on motorcycle around the Gomari Costain bus stop around the metropolis while on duty at the home of retired Commissioner of Police Isa Kaita's house at 8:30pm.

Saturday, July 17, 2010 – Mobile Police Sergeant Mohammed Danbanjo of MOPOL 6 was attacked and killed at his residence in Bulunkutu Abuja, in the outskirts of the Maiduguri metropolis around 7:30pm.

Sunday, August 1, 2010 – Usman Saidu Misali, Instructor, State School of Nursing & Midwifery was killed by two unidentified persons at Dala Almderi (beside Bulunkutu Abuja) around 10:28pm shortly after returning from his patent medicine store which he operates around the bus stop in the area.

Sunday, August 15, 2010 – Corporal Ahmed Masama, Bulabulin Divisional Police Station was attacked and killed around 11pm by three persons on a motorbike. His AK 47 rifle was also taken away after he was shot and killed while he was on duty at a microfinance bank near the Maiduguri Monday Market in the city center.

Wednesday, August 25, 2010 – Inspector Shettima Mustapha & Corporal Ahmed Mohammed, Bulunkutu Divisional Police Station, Jere LGA (outskirt of Maiduguri) were victims to four

unidentified assailants dressed in black overalls who rode on two motorcycles. After blocking their path, and felling them, the assailants fired rapidly at close range and took away their AK 47 rifles.

Tuesday, August 31, 2010 – Bulama Hassan (Ward Head), Bulabulin Alajiri, outskirts of metropolis was killed in front of his residence around 8:30pm by two assailants on a motorcycle.

Sunday, September 5, 2010 – Retired ASP Zannah Kyari (Bama LGA) and Alhaji Modu (trader), Kalari, Maiduguri. The first, retired Assistant Superintendent of Police Zannah Kyari was killed in front of his residence in Bama town as he returned from night prayers around 10pm. The second victim, Alhaji Modu, a trader was killed when the District Head of Kalari area in Limanti Ward of Maiduguri, Lawan Zanna Mohammed Kagu, was targeted around 6:30pm in front of his residence after performing ablution for the sunset prayers.

September 7, 2010: Gunmen attack a prison in Bauchi, killing about five guards and freeing numerous prisoners, including former sect members.

Monday September 11, 2010. The Bombing of a police divisional headquarters at Gaboru. Members of the sect inspite of heavy security presence carried out sporadic gun shots which has no doubt heightened the fear of residents. Police, however, said the station is an outpost, which was upgraded illegally to a Divisional Police Station by a former Commissioner of Police in the State

Monday, September 20, 2010 – Ba'Abdu (a kolanut seller) was killed around 1pm by gunmen riding on a motorcycle while sitting in front of a mosque during an attack on a Bulama at Gwaidamgari, behind railway Terminus quarters in old Maiduguri. This was the first daylight killing. One Baba Kale, a grain seller was injured too.

Wednesday, October 6, 2010 – Alhaji Awana Ali Ngala (ANPP) National Vice Chairman (northeast). The killing of Alhaji Awana Ali Ngala, the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) National Vice Chairman (northeast) in the living room of his home in Maiduguri on October 6, 2010 brought a new dimension to the killings.

Thursday, October 7, 2010 – Mamman Zannah, senior council staff, Bama LG was killed at his ‘New York’ residence in Bama town after he was accosted by four gunmen riding on two motorcycles after the evening prayers around 8:25pm in company of friends and neighbours.

Saturday, October 9, 2010 – Sheikh Bashir Mustapha and Alhaji Modu Sunoma The next casualties were the killing of an Islamic cleric, Sheikh Bashir Mustapha, along with his pupil, Alhaji Modu Sunoma on October 9, 2010 in his house at Kanti Bakwai, Layin Gidan Hajiya mai Tuwon Yasin in Gwange ward of Maiduguri.

Friday, October, 15 2010 - In Bauchi gun men who were *Boko Haram* members killed two policemen manning a checkpoint in the latest wave of shootings. The attack led authorities to announce that they were banning the night time use of motorcycles in the city of Bauchi, where the shooting occurred “as a result of the activities of gunmen suspected to be *Boko Haram*.”

The following was compiled by Alex Thurston; a PhD student, studying “Islam in Africa” at Northwestern University and blogs at Sahel Blog.

December 28, 2010: Gunmen assassinate a senior police officer and two others at a hospital in Maiduguri.

January 3, 2011: Gunmen assassinate a policeman in Maiduguri.

January 28, 2011: Gunmen assassinate ANPP gubernatorial candidate Modu Fannami Gubio and eight others in Maiduguri.

February 15, 2011: Gunmen attack a church in Maiduguri, no casualties confirmed.

February 20, 2011: Gunmen assassinate a policeman in Maiduguri.

February 23, 2011: Gunmen assassinate a policeman in Maiduguri.

February 28, 2011: Gunmen attack a police commander's home and kill two policemen.

March 2, 2011: Gunmen assassinate two policemen in Maiduguri.

March 13, 2011: Gunmen assassinate a cleric, Imam Ibrahim Ahmed Abdullahi in Maiduguri.

March 27, 2011: Gunmen assassinate ANPP leader Alhaji Modu Gana Makanike in Maiduguri.

April 9, 2011: Bombings at polling places injured several and killed some in Maiduguri.

April 20, 2011: A bombing in Maiduguri kills a policeman.

April 24, 2011: Four bombs exploded in Maiduguri, killing at least three.

May 17, 2011: Gunmen kill a policeman in Maiduguri.

May 29, 2011: Bombings at an army barrack in Bauchi city; no death was reported.

May 31, 2011: Gunmen assassinate Abba Anas, brother of the Shehu of Borno, in Maiduguri.

June 6, 2011: Gunmen assassinate Muslim cleric Ibrahim Birkuti in Maiduguri.

June 7, 2011: Teams of gunmen launch parallel attacks with guns and bombs on a church and police stations in Maiduguri, killing five.

June 16, 2011: Bombing at police headquarters in Abuja, triggered by a suspected suicide bomber, who drove his vehicle into the premises. The bomber died in the incident.

June 20, 2011: Gunmen attack a bank and a police station in Kankara (Katsina State), but police later say they were bandits, not Boko Haram.

June 26, 2011: Gunmen shoot and bomb a bar in Maiduguri kills some 25 people.

August 6, 2011: Bombing at the United Nation building in Abuja by a suspected suicide bomber of which Boko Haram claimed responsibility.

November 4, 2011: Attacks on Damaturu police stations, churches, and banks, about 150 died.

December 25, 2011: Madalla Catholic church bombed, about 45 people are dead and injured.

January 5-6, 2012: Different attacks in Mubi, Yola, Gombe and Maiduguri, more than 37 are reported dead.

January 20, 2012: Bomb explosion at different locations in Kano, about 185 dead and injured

January 28, 2012: Nigeria Army killed 11 Boko Haram insurgents around Maiduguri

February 8, 2012: Bombing at Army Headquarters Kaduna

March 8, 2012: Two Italian hostages were killed during an attempt to rescue them

April 8, 2012: A Kaduna church was bombed, 38 died and 80 injured

May 31, 2012: 5 members and a German hostage died during a raid by Joint Task Force.

June 17, 2012: Suicide bombers strike three churches in Kaduna, about 50 people died

August 7, 2012: Okene Deeper Life Church shooting where about 19 people died

It is worthy of note that there is hardly any northern Nigerian who has not been affected by the activities attributed to this group in one form or another. It is also important to note the significant contribution that careless utterances have made into rising of the crisis. There is no doubt that many of the statements attributed to Yusuf Muhammad are heresy, treasonable, rebellious and parts of the Hate Speech which need to be evaluated and vetted.

The Proposed Hate Speech Bill: Islamic Perspective

Hate speech is defined as speech which attacks a person or group on the basis of attributes such as race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, or gender.(Wikipedia, 5/11/17) It goes further to explain that website which uses hate speech may be called a hate site. Although state laws vary, Hate crime laws in the United States permit federal prosecution of hate crimes committed on the basis of a person's protected characteristics of race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hate_crime_laws_in_the_United_States, 5/11/17)

Earlier in the month of August, 2017, Vice President, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Professor Yemi Osinbajo said hate speech would no longer be tolerated in Nigeria as it was tantamount to

terrorism. (Adelakun, 2017:2) Shortly after this, the minister of interior, Abdulrahman Danbazau also made the disclosure, saying it will soon become a criminal offence for anyone to make hate speech - He said that hate speech would not be allowed in Nigeria and that a bill that would ensure the prosecution of people who engage in hate speech is underway as it had been submitted to the Ministry of Justice. According to the Minister, the draft speech contains the laws and punishment for hate speech. So, if the national assembly passes that law, certainly anybody who is engaged in hate speech will be prosecuted in accordance with the law. (<https://www.naija.ng>, 5/11/17)

The Islamic perspective on hate speech is very clear especially in respect to Muslim scholars who engage in the act of preaching. Allah does not love the public utterance of hurtful speech (language) unless (it be) by one to whom injustice has been done; and Allah is Hearing, Knowing. (Surah an-Nisā, 4.148) It is ordained for a Muslim to always use the best words and never target anyone directly, never directly say to anyone "you are an infidel and you will go to Hell" etc. "Show forgiveness, speak for justice and avoid the ignorant." (Surah al-‘Arāf 7.199)

It is noticed that some ignorant people directly point five fingers to each other and even use words like Shaytān or Disbeliever or other abusing and hurting words etc. Muslims are enjoined to try to use soft and polite words. Try to unite on those which are common among us first and try to make the environment friendly to inform each other and make Dua for each other. It is not proper as a Muslim’s behaviour to use any words which might hurt others, either Muslims or non-Muslims. Even some words are effective enough to kill and now in the west we have seen people, especially teenagers doing suicide or homicide to those who were bullying him / her, and so this is a murder case without the use of weapons etc. There should be wisdom when we talk as a good friend, good informer and effective preacher. It should be remembered that propagators of Islam are helpers not killers. So a scholar should help as many people as he can to protect them from Fire of Hell, with Positive Da’wah.

It is also instructive to Muslim preacher to "Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance." (Surah an-Nahl 16.125) It must also be remembered that both Prophets Musa (pbuh) and Khidr (pbuh) were

prophets and obeyed Allah but disagreed on some of their mission. So we might differ in our missions to help the world, but our goal to obey Allah is the same. You might be obeying Allah, according to what you understand and another Muslim also obeying Allah according to what the person understands.

Hence our words will be acceptable to Allah and the people because our speech is beneficial in guiding towards goodness or reconciling people, or teaching useful knowledge, and will increase the love of people to each other. If we say a word of goodness we will get Allah's reward and the love and respect of the people and so we will be triumphant.

It is a popular Hadith that Prophet Muhammad (s) says: “If man is not able to say something useful, he should keep silent (from bad words)”. Invariably, his silence will keep him far from Allah's wrath and from the harm which might befall him and his community as a result of saying bad words. Whoever does evil deeds to people, people will surely confront him with evil too. And certainly, if one speaks bad words it may cause not only him problems and harm. This makes him regret and wish he had kept silent and had not spoken. Incidentally, the Prophet Muhammad (s) educates us with good manners: Either you speak a useful and good word, or be silent which is better for you than speaking evil words. Obviously, Hate speech bill and its subsequent law in Nigeria and elsewhere is a step in the right direction.

Recommendations on Muslims Reaction to Blasphemy

Blasphemy is a very controversial topic in Islam that has taken on new importance due to the proliferation of instant global communication. According to Murtada Muhammad Gusau, Muslim extremists incorrectly cite a precedent in classical Islamic law to justify gross acts of vigilante violence and murder. (Murtala, Premium Times, 5/6/16) Therefore, it is important for us to understand the context of the classical ruling and to view this issue in the larger perspective of the Qur’ān and Sunnah as a consistent whole.

The highest order of blasphemy is when Allah and/or His Messenger (s) is insulted (*Sabb ala Allah wa Rasulihi*). When this happens, we are commanded in the Qur’ān to respond with patience, beautiful preaching, and graceful avoidance. The Qur’ān records the fact that the

Prophet was called a “sorcerer,” a “madman,” and a “liar,” yet Allah commanded him to be patient and to increase his acts of worship.

Allah Said: “Be patient over what they say and avoid them with gracious avoidance.” (Surah Al-Muzzamil 73:10) And Allah said: “So be patient over what they say and exalt with the praises of your Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting...” (Surah Qaf 50:39) A similar expression is stated in Surah Ta Ha (20:130). These insults deeply hurt the feelings of the Prophet and his Companions, but Allah did not prescribe revenge for them. Allah said: “We already know that your heart is constrained by what they say, so glorify the praises of your Lord and be among those who prostrate.” (Surah Al-Hijr 15:97-98) In fact, Allah told the Prophet and his Companions to expect more insults and mockery from the followers of other religions, and that they should remain patient and not let their abuse shake their faith. Allah said:

“You will surely be tested in your possessions and in yourselves, and you will surely hear from those who were given the scripture before you and from those who associate others with Allah much abuse. But if you are patient and fear Allah that is of the matters requiring resolve.” (Surah Ali Imran 3:186)

There are many recorded incidents in the life of the Prophet in which he was mocked, defamed, and even physically attacked for his faith in Islam, but despite this abuse the Prophet responded with patience, forbearance, mercy, and forgiveness. In one incident, a group of Jews insulted the Prophet in his own home. Although the Prophet was the leader of Madinah at the time, he did not order these men to be harmed. Rather, he used the incident to teach his Companions an important lesson about kindness. Aisha reported:

“A group of Jews asked permission to visit the Prophet and when they were admitted they said, “Death be upon you.” I said to them, “Rather death and the curse of Allah be upon you!” The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: “O Aisha, Allah is kind and He loves kindness in all matters.” I said, “Have you not heard what they said?” The Prophet said: “I said to them: And upon you.” (Bukhari 6528)

Al-Bukhari records this narration in his chapter regarding those who curse and abuse the Prophet, which strongly implies that he did not believe legal punishment should be applied to every case of blasphemy. Badr ud-Din Al-Ayni, a scholar of the Hanafi School, comments on this chapter heading: “Al-Bukhari has adopted the method of the people of Kufi on this issue,

that if someone curses or berates the Prophet and he is a non-Muslim citizen, then he is rebuked but he is not killed. This is the opinion of Ath-Thawri.” (Al-Ayni 34/412).

In another incident, the Prophet was defamed and insulted by one of the men of Madinah who was upset with his method of distributing booty. The Prophet did not retaliate against him even though he was very disturbed by it, citing the fact that Musa (Moses), peace be upon him, was harmed by his people with much greater abuse. Ibn Mas’ud reported:

“The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, was distributing a booty among the people when a man from the Ansar said, “By Allah, Muhammad did not intend to please Allah with this distribution!” I came to the Prophet and informed him about this, then anger could be seen on his face and the Prophet said: “Moses was hurt with more than this, yet he remained patient.” (Bukhari)

Therefore, it is not mere blasphemy that warrants the death penalty, but rather only when it is combined with acts of treason and sedition. For example, the Prophet ordered the execution of Ka’ab ibn Al-Ashraf as he conspired to wage war against Madinah. Ka’ab also wrote poetry satirizing the Prophet and his Companions but this was not his only offence. Rather, he posed an imminent danger to the Muslim community due to his support for gathering an army. Badr ud-Din Al-Ayni comments on the story of Ka’ab and other narrations: “In these traditions it is shown that they were not killed merely for their insults. Indeed, they were only killed due to their aid of the enemy and gathering together for war and supporting it.” (Al-Ayni 34/413) This was the general social and political context within which the classical ruling against blasphemy had developed.

Murtala in Premium Times (5/6/16) has identified one particular proof-text being used in support of ‘vigilante violence’ which we must critically examine. In his expression, “Extremists and Mob” cite this narration in isolation and without context to justify the murder of anyone who insults the Prophet. The fault in their interpretation results from their attempt to derive a legal ruling from an anomalous narration and in disregard for general rules and principles firmly established in stronger texts. It was case of a blind man who had a lady servant who would abuse the Prophet and disparage him. He forbade her from doing it but she did not stop. The narration put it that the man killed the servant and upon hearing about it, the Prophet did not reprimand the

blind man. Rather, the Prophet said: “Bear witness that there is no punishment for her killing.” (Abu Dawud 4361)

There are problems with this narration both in its chain of authorities and in the text itself. This is a solitary (*Ahad*) narration coming by route of the sub-narrator Uthman Ash-Shaham who is widely regarded as trustworthy, but upon whom some scholars have cast doubt. An –Nasa’i in *Tahdhib Al-Kamal* (5495) expressed doubt on Uthman Ash-Shaham’s ability to narrate about certain topics. In addition, Al-Bukhari, the leading scholar of prophetic narrations, did not narrate from him. Certainly a narration involving such strong legal implications should be narrated by a wide range of authorities whose capabilities are beyond question, yet this is not the case. It is possible that Uthman Ash-Shaham made an error relating the narration’s context, details, and implication. Furthermore, there is a degree of anomaly (*shadh*) in this narration as it apparently contradicts several of the verses and traditions we previously mentioned. An anomalous narration is one that is related from trustworthy sources, but is contradicted by stronger sources.

Finally, the fact that this narration contradicts what is authentically and abundantly reported elsewhere should make us very cautious about deriving a general rule from it. More so, it is not permissible for a Muslim without judicial authority to implement Islamic legal punishments on his own initiative. Vigilante justice, or “taking the law into our own hands,” is unlawful in Islam because it will lead to chaos and possibly greater harm than the crimes themselves. Likewise, it is not permissible for a Muslim to declare war or to commit an act of war without lawful authority.

Conclusion

It is hoped that the two main objectives of this paper are achieved via its contents. Unity of the Muslims is derivable when the opinion on beautiful methodology of preaching is unified. It is expected that Muslims consider the tribulation of *Maitatsine*, *Boko Haram* and other crises, when making utterances in the midst of their followers who trust them, respect them and are always ready to associate with their opinion

National security is also targeted in this paper and it is derivable when there is peace as emphasized in this work. Every adherent of a particular religion should respect opinion and tolerate religion of the other. This becomes possible and simple when everyone takes caution in selection of what to say, how to say and where to say it.

The Hate Speech Bill as proposed by Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is a step in the right direction. It is among the teachings of Islam to put in place policies, law and regulations that would put everyone on his toe, to help have a harmonious nation devoid of heresy, provocative and inciting comments as well as Hate Speech which are capable of putting the Nigerian state in jeopardy and terrible tension.

Both unity of the Muslims and national security are achievable if Muslims work by recommendation of patience, perseverance and tolerance. No body stands to lose anything if we all agree that we should eschew the idea that common Muslims may punish blasphemy against Islam without legal authorization. We should keep remember that Islam does not authorize individual Muslims to appropriate for themselves the role of judge, jury, and executioner. It is a well-established principle in Islam that legal punishment may only be carried out by authorities who act upon due process.

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