

## ***From Maitatsine to Boko-Haram and Beyond: The Implication of the Hate Speech Bill for Muslim Unity in Nigeria***

Uthman Mohammed Mustapha KANNIKE

Researcher of Islamic Studies in the Department of Islamic studies

Bayero University, Kano, Kano state, Nigeria.

almustaphaum@yahoo.com, almustaphaum@gmail.com

+2348056664157

---

### ***Abstract***

*Nigeria indeed lost innumerable lives and properties from the activities cum crisis of Maitatsine between 1980 and 1985. Greater magnitude of loss has continued to be recorded since the 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. The subsequent Kano crises are attributed to Maitatsine because the bulk of Maitatsine crises took place in Kano. The most disastrous crisis since the 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 in 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 adopts content analysis method found that the Islamic injunction on best methodology for Muslim preacher demands that he 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 seeks 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 an introduction of preaching control in Nigeria to eschew such utterances that disunite Muslims and/or endanger the lives and property of Nigerian citizens.*

### **Introduction**

Among Allah's blessings upon man is that He made him a thoughtful and sane being and endowed him with a tongue. 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 (T. M. Al-Anwar, 2013). The 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 (Peter Economy, 2015). In this vein, provocative utterances in the guise of religion have dealt a great blow to Nigeria through several religious tensions and crises. In some cases, the utterances in question were pure blasphemy from mischievous non-Muslims while in other cases they were inciting statements from supposed Muslim preachers as reaction to a “blasphemy” or an “unacceptable” government policy. The enormity of the danger in inflammatory statements reflect 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 .. أليقظ أمية أم نيام

An interpretation that is close to meaning of the above is as follows:

*I see under the ashes a blinking ember(burning coal)*

*And it is feared that it results in 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 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 the end of the *Maitatsine* crises and 2002 in which the menace of *Boko Haram* emerged, there were many violent crises, though less popular than the two most disastrous ones, especially in Kano which was the base of *Maitatsine*. In an attempt to do this, the work shall be divided into five subheadings excluding

the introduction and conclusion. The subheadings 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: An 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 fanatical religious group which erupted in the Northern parts of Nigeria in 1980. It is one of the names by which the leader of the group was known. His real name was Muhammadu Marwa. His aliases included: Muhammadu Arab, Muhammadu *Mai Tabsiri*, Muhammadu Marwa *Darka* and Muhammadu Allah *Tatsine*. 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 believed in and to those who did not believe in the same, he would say “*Allah tatsine*” meaning: “May Allah’s curse be upon them” (FGN, 1981:12) For this reason, he and his group were identified as *Maitatsine*.e ‘the one who curses’ and less commonly, as *AllahTatsine*.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 (FGN, 1981:29). 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 radio, watches, bicycles, cars and possession of more money than immediately needed. In 1979, he even rejected the prophethood of Muhammad and portrayed himself as *an-nabiy* (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 themselves and attacking their prey. 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 lent 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). Meanwhile, the purpose as claimed by the group was to reform Muslim worship and to cleanse Islam from its many non-Muslim accretions. (Olayiwola: 2007:126)

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. (Adelakun, 2017)

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 (Adelakun, 2017). However, there are many reports on the atrocities of *Maitatsine* some of which are similar to the above while others have little differences. For instance, a summary in *Africa Today* by Adesoji (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 certain 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 the heretical utterances of *Maitatsine*.

### **Aftermath of *Maitatsine* in Kano: Menace of Provocative Utterances**

The antecedent 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 the 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 (Kukah, 1993: 154)

It is relevant to recall that the 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. It is therefore necessary that approval of the Government be sought before construction of a church takes place in such city. Incidentally, many years after the *Masjid* (Mosque) had been constructed; the extreme proximity of the suddenly erected new Church to the Mosque was not ideal to many Muslims. Some Muslim youths around the area felt the need to make a protest to avoid anything that might lead to religious crisis as a result of the Church's plan. However, these Muslim youths were 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 youths an irrational act was understood to be tantamount to "do your worst" and in other word, provocative. Hence, it led to loss of lives as reported above.

**Kano Riot, 1991**

The headline on the front page 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). While the protest continued, the state government which had not responded to the application received from the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) asking for the use of the Race Course for Bonke’s one-week crusade cautioned by asking CAN 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 unchanged 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 that were worth millions of naira were destroyed. At Airport Road, a big Mobil filling station was burnt, 16 vehicles were also burnt and about three nearby filling stations were as well razed. About 20 churches and mosques were also touched including a Mosque at Emir’s 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 four previous events. Several thousands of posters were pasted around Kano city. Some of the posters, according to Mukhtar (1992: 17), carried the captions like “Jesus for all by the year 2000”, and “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 Gedion Akaluka, a Christian of the Ibo ethnic group, devastatingly desecrated and mutilated a 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 a blasphemy of the highest order. It is not enough to say that the Muslims accused Gedion Akaluka 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, Akaluka was neither remorseful of his blasphemous utterances and action nor reprimanded or called to order by CAN. Consequently, he was killed in the midst of the tension he himself created (The Guardian 3 June, 1995).

Provocative utterances 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 (USDS, 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 stated 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 of the USDS 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:

Uthman Mohammed Mustapha KANNIKE, *From Maitatsine to Boko-Haram and Beyond: The Implication of the Hate Speech Bill for Muslim Unity in Nigeria*, pp. 151 - 171

*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 in 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). Generally speaking, *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 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 him, 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*'s 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 Schools would 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 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*  
*Bakarataba Sallah*  
*Ba'abiyarhanyar Allah*  
*Saiyawanzagin 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 sect equally opposed to working in the public sector. Its members organized themselves into a structured command, with Muhammad Yusuf as the commander-in-chief otherwise known as the *Amiru al-Aam*. There were two deputies to him addressed as *Na'ib al- Amiru al-Aam* 1 and 2. The state commands had their *Amir* or commander, just as each Local Government Area had its own *Amir*. At all different levels, the followers constituted the subjects. They were 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 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2009 when Muhammad Yusuf, the *Boko Haram* sect leader threatened, while addressing his followers over an arrest made of some members, (see Mustapha, 2014 for details) that his group would carry out a 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 headquarters and mosque. In the same year, the sect leader was arrested and killed in police custody. But about a year later, Maiduguri and its 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. Everyone feared the group whose members had murdered a handful of police, local, Muslim clerics and politicians among others. The group had engineered massive prison breaks and claimed responsibility for bombing many 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 26<sup>th</sup> 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 and 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 died. 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 attacked 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 Gamboru; Members of the sect in spite of heavy security presence carried out sporadic gun shots which 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) was killed. 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 Local Government Area 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 were the next casualties. 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 assassinated a senior police officer and two others at a hospital in Maiduguri.

**January 3, 2011:** Gunmen assassinated a policeman in Maiduguri.

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

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

**February 20, 2011:** Gunmen assassinated a policeman in Maiduguri.

**February 23, 2011:** Gunmen assassinated a policeman in Maiduguri.

**February 28, 2011:** Gunmen attacked a police commander's home and killed two policemen.

**March 2, 2011:** Gunmen assassinated two policemen in Maiduguri.

**March 13, 2011:** Gunmen assassinated a cleric, Imam Ibrahim Ahmad Abdullahi, in Maiduguri.

**March 27, 2011:** Gunmen assassinated ANPP leader Alhaji Modu Gana Mekanike in Maiduguri.

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

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

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

**May 17, 2011:** Gunmen killed a policeman in Maiduguri.

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

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

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

**June 7, 2011:** Teams of gunmen launched 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 attacked a bank and a police station in Kankara (Katsina State), but police later say they were bandits, not Boko Haram.

**June 26, 2011:** Gunmen shot and bombed a bar in Maiduguri killing 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 of security force and a German hostage died during a raid by Joint Task Force.

**June 17, 2012:** Suicide bombers struck 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 escalating 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. 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. (Wikipedia, 2017)

Earlier in the month of August, 2017, Vice President, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Professor Yemi Osinbajo said that 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 said that it would 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 was underway as it had been submitted to the Ministry of Justice. According to the Minister, the draft speech contained the laws and punishment for hate speech. So, if the national assembly passed that law, certainly anybody who is engaged in hate speech would be prosecuted in accordance with the law (Emeka, 2017).

The Islamic perspective on hate speech is very clear especially in respect to Muslim scholars who preach. 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-'Arāf7.199)

It is noticed that some ignorant people directly point five fingers to each other and even use words like *Shaytān* or disbeliever or other abusive and hurtful 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 have seen people, especially teenagers, committing suicide or homicide due to depression after being verbally bullied. 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, which is 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) educated us on good manners: He says "Let anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day either speak a good word or be silent" (Al-Bukhari, 1973). Evidently, silence is better than speaking evil, provocative or blasphemous words. Obviously, the hate speech bill as well as subsequent law in Nigeria and elsewhere is a step in the right direction.

### **Recommendations on Muslims' Reaction to Blasphemy**

Blasphemy is a formation and controversial topic in Islam that has taken a new dimension due to the proliferation of Information Communication Technology (ICT). According to Murtada Muhammad Gusau, Muslim extremists incorrectly cite a precedent in classical Islamic law to justify gross acts of violence and murder. (Murtala, 2016) 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 (*Sabbalā 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 Says: "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 says:

*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 these abuses 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 reports:

*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. (Al-Bukhari, 1973: 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. Badrud-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, 855 AH)

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 reports:

*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. (Al-Bukhari, 1973)*

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'abibn 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. Badrud-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, 855 AH). This was the general social and political context within which the classical ruling against blasphemy had developed.

Murtala (2016) has identified one particular proof-text being used in support of ‘vigilante violence’ which we must critically examine. In his expression, “Extremists and Mob” indulge on 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 a 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.” (Al-Sijistānī, 2001:4361).

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 was widely regarded as trustworthy, but upon whom some scholars have cast doubt. An – Nasa’iin 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 made 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 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. Moreso, 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 proper 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 the 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 the 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, laws 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. Nobody 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 always 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 can only be carried out by authorities who act upon due process.

### References

- ‘Ali, Abdullah Yūsuf,(1989)*The Holy Qur’an: Text, Translation and Commentary*. Amana Corporation, Brentwood Maryland, USA.
- Abdul Kareem Mohammed, (2010), *The paradox of Boko Haram*, Moving Image Limited, Kano.
- AdelakunAbimbola, (2017) *But, what exactly is hate speech?* In Punch Newspaper, published on [August 31, 2017](#)

- Abu AbdulfattahAdelabu, *Islam in Africa–West Africa in particular*, accessed through [www.esinislam.com](http://www.esinislam.com) on April 5, 2017
- AdesojiAbimbola O., (2011) *BetweenMaitatsine and Boko Haram: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Response of the Nigerian State in Africa Today, Volume 57, Number 4*, (Summer 2011) pp. 98-119 (Article), Published by Indiana University Press
- Africa No 1 Radio [Libreville, in French]. 13 February 1995. "Nigeria; Kaduna Christians Mount Two-Day Strike in Protest at Killing, Attack." (BBC Summary 14 Feb. 1995/NEXIS)
- Al-Anwar T. B. (2013), *Controlling the Tongue*, accessed through <https://www.al-islam.org/the-characteristics-of-a-muslim-al-balagh/controlling-tongue> 12/11/2017
- Albert, Isaac O. (1997) *Kano: Religious Fundamentalism and Violence*. In *Jeunes, Culture de la Rue et Violence Urbaine en Afrique*, edited by G. Herault and P. Adesanmi. Ibadan: IFRA & African Books Builders Ltd.
- Al-Ayni Mahmud b. Ahmad Badrud-Din, (855 A.H), *Umdat al-Qari fi Sharh Sahih Al-Bukhari*, Dar al-Ihya' at-Turath al-Araby, Beirut.
- Al-Bukhārī, (1973) *al-Jāmi' al-Sahih, Sharh al-Sanadī*, Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya Beirut.
- Al-Kanāny Nasr bn. Sayār (d.131 A.H), *Poem to Caliph Mirwān bn. Muhammad*, accessed through <https://www.shaydzmi.wordpress.com>, on 30/10/17
- An-Nasāi, (1981) *Sunan An-Nasāi*, Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, Beirut.
- Al-Sijjistānī, A. (2001), *SunanAbīDāwūd*, Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, Beirut.
- Al-Tirmidhī, M, (2003) *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut.
- Boer Jan H., (2003) *Nigeria Decades of Blood, Studies in Christian and Muslim Relations*, Stream Christian Publishers, Jos.
- Daily Trust of Friday December 5, 2008
- Daily Trust of Monday December 8, 2008
- Daily Trust News Paper, Monday, August 3, 2009 p.2
- Emeka Mamah et al.(2017), *FG declares hate speech as terrorism*, accessed through <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/08/fg-declares-hate-speech-terrorism/>
- Federal Military Government.(1999) *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Promulgation Decree)*, no. 24 of 1999 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria
- Federal Government of Nigeria. (1981) *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry on Kano Disturbance* Lagos: Federal Government Press.
- Hiskett, Mervyn. (1987) "The Maitatsine Riots in Kano: An Assessment". *Journal of Religion in Africa* 17(3):209–223, accessed through [www.booksandjournals.brillonline.com](http://www.booksandjournals.brillonline.com) on 28/10/2017
- Ibn Kathīr, I, (2006) *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, Maktabah al-Imān, Mansūrah, Riyadh.
- Ibrahim Omar F. (1997), "Religion and Politics: A View from the North" in *Transition without End: Nigerian Politics and Civil Society under Babangida*, edited by Larry Diamond, A. Kirk-Greene and Oyeleye Oyediran. Ibadan: Vantage Publishers
- Kukah Mathew H., (1993) *Religion, Politics, and power in Northern Nigeria*, Spectrum Books, Ibadan.
- Lubeck Paul M. (1985). "Islamic Protest under Semi-Industrial Capitalism: 'Yan Tatsine Explained" in *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, accessed through <https://www.africabib.org/rec.php?RID=189607939> on 14/11/2017
- Mukhtar, R. Isa. (1992), "The linguistic background of some religious crisis in Kano" in *Al Bayan: Journal of Islamic Research vol.1: P. 73-81*, accessed through <https://books.openedition.org/ifra/788?lang=en>, on 12/11/2017
- Uthman Mohammed Mustapha KANNIKE, From Maitatsine to Boko-Haram and Beyond: The Implication of the Hate Speech Bill for Muslim Unity in Nigeria, pp. 151 - 171

- Murtada Muhammad Gusau (June 5, 2016) *Kano Killing: What Islam Says About Blasphemy and Killings*, Premium Times Special Publication, Kano.
- Muslim Al-Imam, (1990) *Sahih Muslim*, Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, Beirut.
- Mustapha Uthman M. (2014), *A Study of the Emergence and Activities of Jama'Ah Ahl As-Sunnah Li Ad-Da'Wah Wa Al-Jihad (Boko Haram) in Northern Nigeria (2002-2012)*  
Unpublished M.A Dissertation submitted to Nasarawa State University, Keffi
- Niels Kastfelt, (1989). "Rumours of Maitatsine: A Note on Political Culture in Northern Nigeria", *African Affairs*, Volume 88, Issue 350, 1 January 1989, Pages 83-90, accessed through <https://academic.oup.com/afraf/article-abstract/88/350/83/152790> on 28/10/17.
- Olawale Isaac Albert, *Violence in metropolitan Kano: A Historical Perspective*, accessed through <https://books.openedition.org/ifra/788?lang=en> on 8/10/2017 on 25/11/2017
- Olayiwola Abdul Fattah (2007), *Islam in Nigeria, One crescent many focuses*, Sakirable Publishers, Lagos.
- Peter Economy, (2015), 26 Brilliant Quotes on the super power of words, accessed through <https://www.inc.com/peter-economy/26-brilliant-quotes-on-the-super-power-of-words.html> on 30/10/2017
- Reuters, 3 June 1995. BC Cycle. "Nigeria Relaxes Curfew in Riot City." (NEXIS), accessed through [www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6ab7318.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6ab7318.html) on 26/11/2017
- Reuters, 31 May 1995. James Jukwey. BC Cycle. "Parking Tip Sparks Nigerian Ethnic Riot; Up to 25 Death." (NEXIS) of Kano Disturbances, accessed through [www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6ab7318.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6ab7318.html) on 26/11/2017
- Tell magazine, 29th October, 1991
- This Day News Paper, 16th November, 2002
- United States Department of States, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1995-1996*.
- Washington, DC: United States Printing Office
- Weekly Trust News Paper, Saturday, August 8, 2009
- Weekly Trust News Paper of October 16, 2010
- Wikipedia, (2017), accessed through [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hate\\_crime\\_laws\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hate_crime_laws_in_the_United_States), 5/11/2017
- Yusuf b. AbdulRahman al-Kalbiy (742 A.H) *Tahdhib al-Kamal fi Asma' ar-Rijal*, Beirut  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hate\\_speech](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hate_speech), accessed on November 5, 2017  
<https://www.naija.ng/1119684-hate-speech-criminal-offence-nigeria-presidency>, accessed on November 5, 2017  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/mohammed-yusuf\(Boko-Haram\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/mohammed-yusuf(Boko-Haram)), the encyclopedia, accessed may 20, 2017  
<https://www.al-islam.org/the-characteristics-of-a-muslim-al.../controlling-tongue>, accessed on September 28, 2017  
[www.radioislam.org.za](http://www.radioislam.org.za), accessed on November 6, 2017  
<https://shaydzmi.wordpress.com>, accessed on 30/10/17  
<https://www.inc.com/peter.../26-brilliant-quotes-on-the-super-power-of-words>, accessed on November 2, 2017  
<https://www.al-islam.org/the-characteristics-of-a-muslim-al.../controlling-tongue>, accessed on November 6, 2017  
<https://shaydzmi.wordpress.com>, accessed on 30/10/17  
<https://www.inc.com/peter.../26-brilliant-quotes-on-the-super-power-of-words>, accessed November 2, 2017.