

OPENING REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT OF CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA,
HIS EMINENCE, PASTOR AYO ORITSEJAFOR AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE
NATIONAL CHRISTIAN ELDERS FORUM ON
THURSDAY 15TH JANUARY, 2015
AT
THE NATIONAL CHRISTIAN CENTRE, ABUJA

Distinguished Elders of Christendom in Nigeria,

I welcome you most warmly and with unquantifiable gratitude to this meeting. At this period of great crisis, both for the church and for the nation, it is very encouraging that we have elders that we can turn to, for support, for guidance and for intervention.

Distinguished Christian and national elders, we are in great distress, both as a church and as a country. I will neither mince words nor seek to underplay the gravity of the situation confronting us. On earth, the sights are devastating while the signals from heaven are ominous. As the people of God, we believe in the efficacy of prophecy and we do not trifle with genuine prophetic unction. We have reached the point in which it is clear, the elders must be called in. Thank you very much for heeding the invitation.

The past 5 to 6 years in Nigeria have been years of bloodshed and destruction for the Nigerian church. A section of the country has aligned itself with external aggressors to undermine both the territorial integrity and national ideology of the Nigerian state. While they kill, maim, and mutilate Christians in the northern parts of the country, they have succeeded in creating the deceptive impression that more Muslims are killed than Christians. Nothing could be farther from the truth. For example, a questionable report by The Economist in December 2014 states that “... Many of the victims are Muslim, but the Islamists have also singled out Christians for murder or forced conversion to Islam.” This is an example of the deliberate misinformation of the events unfolding in our nation.

So far, it has been the Christian Association of Nigeria that has been speaking against the various acts of injustice and inhuman treatment meted out to Christians in the northern parts of the country. We have come to the point in which we need the Elders of Christianity from across the geo-political divides in the nation to speak with one voice. It is crucial that Christian elders engage the Government, at every relevant level, as well as the security agencies, the judiciary and other religions in the nation in order to bring lasting and peaceful solution to the crisis on the ground.

Already, Nigeria has the unenviable position of being the worst nation in the world in which Christians are persecuted. Of the 50 nations that officially persecute Christians globally, Nigeria alone carried over 60% of the casualties in 2012 and in 2013. According to a recent World Watch List report, “Christian Deaths Double in 2014”.

Our brethren in the North are crying out. According to another report in the Economist in 2014, “In September a horde of insurgents fell on the verdant villages of Kubi and Watu in Adamawa state and torched more than 500 houses. Arriving in the early morning they spent

*the day looting and killing among scorched corrugated-iron roofs. Bodies were dismembered and left for vultures. The security forces never turned up. "We have not seen them in a long time," says a surviving villager, Ahmed Huda. **"We are alone."***

The destruction and carnage must stop and it is clear, the Islamists are unable to stop themselves. We have been informed that once a Jihad is launched, it either succeeds or all the Jihadists are killed.

Today, Nigeria is being forced to fight a needless war. Our young men and women in the military are killed while national resources that should have been utilized for more meaningful development programs are now diverted to prosecute a needless conflict. An international report claims that it is *"the government's decision to spend \$1 billion on new aircraft and training ..."*

In addition to the orgy of violence on the ground, we need to also look critically at a deliberate manipulation of the Nigerian Constitution aimed at destroying liberal democracy, the ideology upon which Nigeria was birthed and the sectional promotion of an alien ideology based on sectional religious belief. If democratic ideology is truncated in Nigeria, then liberty and freedom of choice shall cease. This conspiracy must be resisted by everyone in favor of freedom and liberty in the nation.

Distinguished elders, as we approach an election period, Nigerians must demand of any incoming government the following solutions:

1. Truth and Reconciliation Commission
2. A new national Constitution based on the original national ideology which is democracy.
3. National Census that must henceforth reflect both religion and ethnicity
4. The implementation of the report of the National Conference
5. The restoration of history lessons in our schools so that succeeding generations will know where we are coming from.

As the letter of invitation points out, the National Christian Elders shall be summoned as situation demands to resolve critical issues that affect both the Christian faith and the nation. We hope that the National Christian Elders shall accept the challenge of this assignment as a service both to Jesus Christ and to the nation.

Thank you very much for your kind attention and I wish you success and fruitfulness on this assignment.

Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor

President

Christian Association of Nigeria

January 15, 2015

The Nigerian army, one of the biggest in Africa, should have little difficulty scattering the amateur jihadists. But its arsenal is decrepit and its troops poorly trained. Hence the government's decision to spend \$1 billion on new aircraft and training, among other things.

Worries about the fair treatment of Christians have also been exacerbated by the situation in the northeast, where Boko Haram, a jihadist group, is trying to establish an Islamic state. Instability has killed more than 16,000 people. Many of the victims are Muslim, but the Islamists have also singled out Christians for murder or forced conversion to Islam.

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DEMANDS

1. Truth And Reconciliation Commission
2. New Constitution based on Liberal Democracy ideology
3. Implementation of report of National Conference
4. National Census
5. The teaching of history in our schools