

THE SOUNDING MEGAPHONE



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THE SOUNDING MEGAPHONE



Sudan and Nigeria are two African countries that sadly have seen much bloodshed. We are going to explore their history in this issue and call for reform. I hope that you will read with interest this month's issue and become involved in calling for change. God bless you.

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You understand that by reading this magazine, you might be exposed to content that you regard to be offensive or objectionable and that you read this magazine at your own risk. We do not intend to offend anyone, however, what is offensive to one person may not be offensive to another. It is difficult, if not impossible, to speak on controversial topics in a clear way without offending someone. We ask that viewers would receive the contents of this magazine in the spirit in which they are given, that is, to speak the truth on sensitive issues in a loving way that does not compromise our conscientious convictions. Freedom of speech is a provision of The Canadian Charter of Rights And Freedoms (Section 2). We want to express in the clearest language possible that all statements made in this issue are meant to be taken not in malice towards any identifiable people group but, rather, as discussion on issues of public interest, for public benefit, in good faith. Our views on the issues contained here are also consistent with our faith beliefs which are contained in our statement of faith which can be viewed on our website

freedomandsocialorder.com. Whether you agree or disagree with what we have stated here, we bless you and invite your feedback.

Nulla nunc lectus

THE HISTORY OF SUDAN

The nation of Sudan has one of the most turbulent histories on Earth. Its history is filled with jihad, gorilla warfare, militias, civil war, ethnic cleansing, religious persecution, mass poverty and intense oppression. The conflict in Sudan's history has led to a fracturing of the country into two separate countries, North and South Sudan.

In ancient times, before Sudan was ever Sudan, this region was part of the Kingdom of Kush. In the 8th century B.C., the Kingdom of Kush invaded Egypt, conquered it and set up its rule from there. One large region ruled by the Kingdom of Kush was Nubia. Its capital was Meroe. Because of its capital, it was also known as the Meroitic Kingdom. Nubian rulers ruled Meroe until the 4th century A.D. By the 6th century A.D., fifty states had evolved out of the Meroitic Kingdom. A significant portion of what we call Sudan today was, at that time, called Alawa and Muqurra.

What is the religious heritage of this region? Islam spread throughout this area for a long period of time, supplanting other religions and bringing the population under its control. For centuries, very little changed in this region of Africa.

In 1820, the region of Sudan was shaken up by the invasion of the Albanian-Ottoman warlord and ruler of Egypt, Muhammad Ali. Muhammad Ali conquered Northern Sudan. The region, as well as most of the rest of modern-day Sudan, was both inherited and conquered by Ismail 1. In 1879, the Great Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, Italy, France, England) forced Ismail off of his throne and set up a ruler named Tewfik 1 in his place. As a result of corruption and mass mismanagement of the empire, a revolt erupted known as the Orabi Revolt. British intervention stabilized, to some degree, the turbulent situation. However, a revolutionary, named Muhammad Ahmad ibn Abd Allah, led another revolt which saw the death of the British Governor General, Charles George Gordon. The British decided to withdraw forces from Sudan and left the country to Muhammad Ahmad. Six months after capturing Khartoum, Muhammad Ahmad died of typhus. After a bitter power struggle, Abdallahi ibn

Muhammad seized control.

In the 1890s, Britain again sought to re-establish rule over Sudan. A number of decisive battles from 1896 to 1898 achieved this. Sudan became a British colony, however, it was run by a governor general appointed by Egypt with British consent. The British divided Sudan into two separate territories, the Muslim North and the Christian South.

In the 20th century, a nationalist movement pressed hard for Sudan's independence from Britain and Britain allowed the North and South Sudanese to have a free vote for independence. At the will of the Sudanese people, in 1954 Sudan became a nation, independent from Britain. Democratically elected Ismail Al-Azhari became the first prime minister of modern Sudan. However, the days for democracy in Sudan were numbered.

On June 30, 1989, Colonel Omar Al-Bashir ousted the unstable coalition government in a bloodless military coup. The radical Al-Bashir immediately began solidifying his control over Sudan. He is a devout Muslim and he instituted an Islamic legal code for the entire country. He assumed the position of chief of state, chief of the armed forces, prime minister and minister of defence. The set-up of his rule was followed by military purges and the banning of political parties, associations and independent newspapers. A number of journalists and political figures were imprisoned. In 1993, Al-Bashir appointed himself as president of the country. In the 1996 national election, he was the only candidate. Sudan had become a single-party state.

What was, and is, the nature of Sudan's government under Al-Bashir? This government has sought to strengthen Islamic fundamentalism and Islamic terrorism. Even Osama Bin Ladin was invited to Sudan. The United States has identified Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism. Hamas is another terrorist organization which has a base within Sudan and is invited to speak with Al-Bashir.

Al-Bashir is probably most known for two

horrific atrocities in Sudan. One of those conflicts is the Darfur conflict. In the region of Darfur, a massive genocidal effort was enacted which has seen the death of somewhere between 200,000 and 400,000 Sudanese. The North Sudanese government denies these statistics and claims that less than 10,000 people have died in this conflict. The other conflict is the long-standing civil war between Al-Bashir's government and the Southern Sudanese. In this conflict, Arab-Muslim militias have killed over 1.5 million professing Christians. This war has resulted in the fracturing of the country. An unbending Southern Sudanese population, supported by the international community, has at long last achieved independence from Northern Sudan.

Although Al-Bashir's Sudan is most infamously known for the Darfur conflicts and the persecution of the Southern Sudanese, Sudan is also haunted by another human rights tragedy. A thriving slave industry has existed in Sudan for years and it is estimated that during the second Sudanese civil war as many as 200,000 people were inducted into slavery. One eighteen-year old man who has been freed and who has received international attention is Ker Aleu Deng. He was a young child when Arab raiders attacked his village, killed the adult male population and inducted him and his mother into slavery. In captivity, he was forced to cite Muslim prayers and he was often beaten. As a punishment, he had chili peppers rubbed into his eyes and this caused him to go blind. Today, he is a free man living in America and he professes to be a Christian.

An international effort to prosecute Al-Bashir resulted in the *International Criminal Court* issuing a warrant for him in March of 2009, accusing him of war crimes and crimes against humanity. In 2010, after a lengthy appeal, the Court held that there was insufficient evidence to charge him with genocide. However, a subsequent warrant for him has been issued but is not expected to result in his surrender. Despite his record, Al-Bashir has strong support from a number of political allies. In the Muslim world, to many he is a hero for aggressively advancing Islam. The International Criminal Court's decision to issue him a warrant is opposed by the *League of Arab States*. It is also

opposed by the governments of Russia and China who have strong economic ties with North Sudan.

Many of Sudan's finest men and women have been bludgeoned to death and snuffed out by the violent rule of Al-Bashir. However, many Sudanese have resisted him and Sharia Law, and their resistance has led to the formation of a new country, South Sudan. May South Sudan inspire others to stand for truth and freedom. May the world also call for and see the prosecution and arrest of Al-Bashir.

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THE PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS IN NIGERIA

Nigeria has an ominous record of the persecution of Christians. Its population is divided primarily between Christians and Muslims. Its history is filled with violent jihad as Nigeria's Muslim population has fought hard to try to make Nigeria an Islamic state. Thousands have had their lives taken in this fight.

To understand the fight which has caused so much bloodshed in Nigeria, we must consider the demographic of the country. Muslims have never had a majority of the population in the country as a whole. However, they have had regions of the country that have been primarily Muslim. One coveted region of the country is the area known as the "Middle Belt." Because of the growth of Christianity in Nigeria and because of the mass movement of Christians, the Middle Belt is now a pretty equal mix of both Christians and Muslims. This has resulted in tensions throughout Nigeria's history. Sadly, tensions have many times erupted into riots and jihads.

One early jihad was the 1980 riots in Kano City. In this three-day riot almost 4,200 people were killed. This particular jihad was actually Muslim fundamentalists attacking non-fundamental Muslims primarily. Some Christians also lost their lives. Most of the deaths in this riot were, however, Muslims as fundamental Muslims were trying to purge from their community those Muslims that they viewed as compromising, insincere Muslims. In 1982, again in the city of Kano, a jihad erupted as the Muslim Student Society protested against the plan of the St. George Anglican Church to construct a church in a location which was, in the opinion of the protesters, too close to a mosque. The new building was to be constructed on the same property as the church's older buildings and the first church had been there since 1930 while the nearby mosque had been erected forty years later. Despite the protestors, the police managed to protect that church but others were destroyed and forty-four people were murdered. In 1991, again in the city of Kano, there was another horrible jihad. This time Muslim rioters were protesting some special meetings held by the Christian missionary,

Reinhard Bonnke. Sadly, hundreds of people lost their lives in this riot. Allegedly, over twenty churches and more than sixty Christian businesses were destroyed. In 1995, another riot/jihad broke out in Kano. Prior to this riot, tensions had been running high over the beheading of Ibo trader. Several different stories had been circulated about him, one accusing his wife and another one accusing him of desecrating a copy of the Quran. An angry mob apprehended him and beheaded him. Because of this incident in 1994, tensions were still high in May 30, 1995, when the next major jihad resulted. It was sparked over an incident in which two Hausa (a Muslim tribe) men had burglarized a car. An Ibo (a predominately Christian tribe) identified the burglars to the owner of a car who, in turn, reported the incident to the police. Although the police charged the burglars, they were released almost immediately. Upon being released, the burglars picked a fight with the Ibo man who had reported them. Other Muslim Hausa men observed the fight and came to the aid of the burglar.¹ This incident escalated into a major riot. One report claims "Muslim fanatics took to the streets killing anybody who could not say [in Arabic] ... 'There is no God but Allah.'" ² There is disagreement over the number of casualties. The state government claims that there were only three. However, military sources claim that there were over twenty-three and Murtala Hospital gave a figure of about two hundred.³

Kano is not the only city to experience riots and jihad. The city of Kafanchan was the site for deadly riots in 1987. At the school, Kafanchan College of Education, Christian students were holding a regular, annual event. In the event, a film was played which ended up offending some Muslim viewers. The meeting was upset by a Muslim woman who grabbed the microphone and called for Muslim boys to help her in an attack. A fight quickly broke out and continued to escalate. The Christians continued their meeting on Saturday of that week and again on Sunday. However, Muslim rioters broke into the church with sticks, knives and clubs. The jihad spread to other churches in town and nine

people were killed. In the end, eight churches were destroyed in Kafanchan and another fourteen were destroyed in Kaduna City. Before these riots were over, over one hundred churches were destroyed as well as fifty cars and many Christian properties. One report claims that, statewide, 152 churches were destroyed as well as five mosques.

In 1991, in the city of Tafawa Balewa a terrible riot broke out. It was sparked when a Christian butcher sold meat to a Muslim. This meat was considered to be non-kosher in Islam. The offended Muslim attacked the butcher with a knife and, later, killed him. A number of other butchers in the area heard of the incident and killed the offended customer. This incident sparked four days of riots which resulted in over 200 people losing their lives. The riots spread to other villages and also to the state capital. Again, statistics vary. Official figures claim a death toll of eighty, however, mortuaries reported almost 500. In the same city of Tafawa Balewa riots erupted in 1994 and also in 2001. One report of the 2001 riot claims that over 200 Christians were murdered.

In 1994, riots broke out in both the cities of Potiskum and Jos. Jos and the Plateau State would again see terrible riots in 2001 and 2002.

In the year 2000, there was another terrible jihad, this time in Kaduna City. This riot was stirred up as a result of the governor of Zamfara State announcing his intention to set up shari'a law. This announcement resulted in a number of public protests held by Christians who did not want shari'a law instituted. In fact, over 50,000 Christians participated in a demonstration. Fighting broke out and both Muslim and Christians claim that the other side began the fight. The fighting escalated to a horrific height. There are no exact statistics of the number who were killed. One report claims that thousands of people were massacred. However, these numbers cannot be confirmed. It was said that over 200 churches were destroyed, 105 mosques and almost 9,000 houses.

The situation in Nigeria remains tense. In 2011, two failed bomb attacks occurred in Jos. On Sunday, March 20, three men were carrying a bomb towards two churches when the bomb went off prematurely and killed the terrorists. Also on that

day, a bomb was found planted at The Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church in Jos. In a neighbouring state, Bauchi, over 4,000 people were displaced over a series of night time attacks by Muslim Fulani tribesmen.

Sadly, the violence in Bauchi state has not been the peak of terror. The 2011 election of a Christian president of the country resulted in massive revolts from the Muslim community. Over 31,000 people have been displaced and it is feared that hundreds of Christians have been killed. One report claims that over 500 people have been killed and over 150 churches burned. Some of the damage includes in Gombe, 38 people murdered, 146 injured, 17 churches burned and 24 houses burned. In Bauchi, 28 people killed and 78 churches burned. In Daura,, 6 churches burned. In Katsina City, 7 people murdered, over 100 Christian displaced and 65 churches destroyed or damaged. In Malunfashi, 25 houses burned, one Bible school burned and 7 churches burned. In Funtua, every church (over 27) in the city was burned.

Nigeria is the home of Boko Haram, a terrorist organization that has been conducting a genocide against Christians. Since they **started in 2009**, it has killed tens of thousands and displaced 2.3 million from their homes. **The group attracted much attention in 2014 when it kidnapped 276 schoolgirls from Chibok.** In July of 2014, Nigeria was estimated to have had the highest number of terrorist murders in the world over the span of one year, 3477, killed in 146 attacks. **In 2015, Muhammadu Buhari was elected as President of Nigeria.**

Canada has partnered with Nigeria in many ways. Canada has provided material and training support to Nigeria. As Canada's ties with Nigeria have been strengthening, may Canada influence Nigeria's government in bringing security and reforms to its country.

Pray for Nigeria's Christians to show forgiveness towards those who have, and presently do, persecute them. Pray also that the Church may be successful in reaching out to and

loving her enemies. Also pray that freedom of religion would be a reality for Christians throughout the country. Pray for their protection as they practice and share their faith with others.

Footnote: 1 Jan H. Boer, *Nigeria's Decades of Blood*. Belleville, Ontario: Essence Publishing, 2003, pp. 12-138.

2Minchakpu, quoted in Jan H. Boer, *Nigeria's Decades of Blood*. Belleville, Ontario: Essence Publishing, 2003, p. 47.

3 Jan H. Boer, *Nigeria's Decades of Blood*. Belleville, Ontario: Essence Publishing, 2003, pp. 12-138.

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NIGERIA BLASPHEMY LAWS

Nigeria has a long history of persecution of Christians. The Republic of Nigeria operates with a two-court system. One is a secular system and the other is a system which incorporates sharia law (only in certain provinces). Both systems of law have provisions for punishing blasphemy. Sharia law, in Nigeria, can measure out severe penalties for this offence, including execution. The constitution of Nigeria stipulates that every Nigerian is entitled to freedom of conscience, freedom of thought, freedom of expression and freedom of religion. However, the legal system in Nigeria is handicapped by a lack of resources and not everyone prosecuted for blasphemy is given a fair trial.

Blasphemy laws become a tool for some to persecute minorities in an unjust and cruel way. When communities launch violent attacks upon others out of religious prejudice, and those attacks leave large numbers of innocent people dead and churches burned, we must never become desensitized to the severity of these crimes. This kind of mob aggression must be strongly resisted. Whose responsibility is this? It is the government's and the legal systems of Nigeria's responsibility. This is not a call for vigilanteism or revenge killing. Absolutely not! However, the government has a huge responsibility to protect its citizens. This must become a high priority.

If nations, like Nigeria, show themselves to have a high commitment to human rights, they should receive our encouragement and support but if they do not then they should not receive our support. One good place for Nigeria to demonstrate this commitment is to remove blasphemy laws from both of its legal systems. May concerned individuals, worldwide, echo this call. May the Canadian government also, more than ever before, bring this challenge to our Nigerian friends.

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