

AL-MIRAJ[☾]

The official bulletin of the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (NSCIA)

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Vote, don't be violent – Sultan

The Sultan of Sokoto and President-General of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), His Eminence, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, has charged Nigerians to ensure that the 2019 elections are free, fair and credible, adding that violence in all its ramifications should be shunned.

The Sultan gave this charge while speaking at the closing ceremony of the “Interfaith Conference on Religious Harmony in Nigeria: Towards the 2019 General Elections” on October 13, 2018 at Sheraton Hotel, Abuja. The conference was organized by the Interfaith Initiative for peace (IIP), co-convened by His Eminence, the Sultan and Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, His Grace, John Cardinal Onaiyekan.

According to the Sultan, religious understanding is important in a multi-religious country like Nigeria and such understanding is a prerequisite to peaceful co-existence. He appealed to Nigerians to exercise their rights to vote for the candidates of their choice while reiterating the need to maintain peace and avoid violence.

The President-General expressed confidence that being a product of a peaceful election process, President Muhammadu Buhari would ensure that the 2019 election would be a

source of pride to Nigerians. He also cautioned politicians against inciting Nigerians against one another saying that utterances being made would be closely monitored.

In his own address, the co-convenor and Archbishop of Abuja,

Cardinal Onaiyekan noted that the original sin thwarting the development of Nigeria is selfishness, which according to him has personal, social, familial, ethnic and religious dimensions. He stressed that emphasis should be on service, not on self-service and politics should no longer be a place to make money, while urging those who want to make

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Shun partisan politics, President Buhari urges religious leaders

President Muhammadu Buhari has cautioned religious leaders in Nigeria against being involved in partisan politics in order not to lose the respect they are accorded by Nigerians.

The President gave this advice while speaking at the closing ceremony of the “Interfaith Conference on Religious Harmony in Nigeria: Towards the 2019 General

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President Muhammadu Buhari



President Muhammadu Buhari, former Heads of State, Gen. Yakubu Gowon and Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar, the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Mr. Boss Mustapha, and the Minister of Abuja, Mallam Musa Bello, the National Security Adviser, Gen. Mungunu, the Chief of Justice of Nigeria, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Archbishop Justin Welby, the Secretary-General of JNII, Dr Khalid Aliyu and the representatives of the NSCIA and several Islamic and Christian leaders at the Interfaith Conference on Religious Harmony in Nigeria: Towards the 2019 General Elections” on held at Sheraton Hotel, Abuja.

Vote, don't be violent – Sultan

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money to venture into competitive business.

The Archbishop canvassed moral revolution in Nigeria, a process that would involve a change of mind and mindset. He also noted that as Nigeria has a reputation for being religious, there should be ethical compact among Nigerians.

Cardinal Onaiyekan noted that religion should be promoting peace and that if a religion does not, it is not better than salt that has lost its state. He therefore cautioned religious leaders to be on their guard and not turn religion to being saltless.

The occasion was attended by the President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, former Heads of State, Gen. Yakubu Gowon and Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar, the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Mr. Boss Mustapha and the Minister of Abuja, Mallam Musa Bello.

Others were the National Security Adviser, Gen. Babagana Mungunu (rtd), the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Walter Onoghen, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Archbishop Justin Welby, the Secretary-General of JNII, Dr Khalid Aliyu; and the representatives of the NSCIA and several Islamic and Christian leaders from Nigeria. ■

Shun partisan politics, President Buhari urges religious leaders

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Election” organised by the Interfaith Initiative for Peace (IIP), on Saturday, October 13, 2018 in Abuja.

According to the President, “having witnessed the roles our religious leaders have been playing so far, I appeal to them to eschew partisan politics and appeal to their respective members to read the manifestoes of each political party, discuss and pray for God's guidance before casting their votes. Religious leaders should not be seen to involve themselves in partisan politics or political controversies. Otherwise, they risk losing their status and public respect”.

He also urged traditional and political leaders to prevail on their subjects and followers to be law-abiding and peaceful as they engage in the ongoing democratic process.

“On their part, traditional rulers are also requested to enlighten their subjects, encourage them to ask questions and seek clarifications before going out to vote. As your President, I will request that you encourage your subjects to

come out and exercise their voting rights as responsible citizens. To all of us politicians, I ask that we discharge our political responsibilities with integrity, bearing in mind that we will one day give account to God, the Almighty,” he said.

The President, who appreciated His Eminence, Alh. Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar and His Eminence, John Cardinal Onaiyekan on their initiative of working for peace and peaceful co-existence as faithful Muslims and Christians in the country, noted that Nigeria has moved on and that “the era of free money, lack of transparency and accountability is over”. He therefore urged Nigerians to ensure a better future for the coming generations while expressing his commitment to peaceful, fair and credible elections in 2019.

“Very soon, political campaigns will commence, leading to elections in February next year. It is my hope and prayer that we will even perform better at the polling stations and see to a peaceful completion of the entire process without resorting to negative use of religion and ethnicity,” he said. ■

Nigeria's Triangular Axis of Evil

History is not just a teacher of all living human beings. It is also a permanent school that constantly reminds mankind of the lesson to learn from the various events and experiences of the past as a means of guidance.

About 800 years ago, an Arab poet of the second Umayyad Dynasty, in Spain, came up with a bewildering stanza that is now more relevant to Nigeria than his own nation and his own time. The poem went thus: "Here is the period in human life about which we had been seriously warned in the words of Ubayy Bn Ka'b and Abdullah Bn Mas'ud; Here is the period in which truth is to be rejected in its totality; And falsehood as well as evil machinations are to be warmly accepted and upheld as societal norms; Should this period linger beyond now, without any positive change, the world will surely forage into a stage in life when there will be no grief over deaths and no joy over new births".

Now, judging Nigeria's situation of today by what we can see and feel against what we are yet to witness or experience, can any prediction be more accurate and more appropriate for our country than the above quoted poem?

With the seeming ongoing resistance to change in Nigeria, how can there be any hope for a better future? Today, Nigeria is dangerously entangled in a triangular axis of evil, the consequences of which cannot be foretold with precision. That axis is like a crushing pendulum swinging restlessly over Africa's most populous country with a threat of ruins. That triangular axis consists of three dominant, vocal blocks: the politicians, the clergy and the media.

While the politicians stand out as the engine room of virtually all the evils afflicting our country and the clergy represents the dangerous chimney through which the polluting smoke of that evil oozes out to suffocate the populace, the media serves as the megaphone for both through the instrumentality of satanic propaganda. Incidentally, the bottom line for all these is nothing other than money. Let money be removed from Nigeria's mode of existence today and sanity will return to our society with a

grandiose posture.

The most disappointing leg in this triangular axis of evil is the clergy. From time immemorial, religion had stood out as the societal salt used as a preservative for all other ingredients with which to prepare the delicious soup of life for the consumption of all and sundry. But with the sudden adoption of water as the main preservative for salt in the 20th century, what else can make the soup of life delicious for its consumers? Ordinarily, salt should be salt in its natural form. To pour water on it in the name of preservative is to deprive it of its natural value. Thus, with the importation of the Pentecostal brand of Christianity that is bitterly coated in capitalism, Nigeria has dangerously become a polluted country with the smoke of religion.

Today, with that importation, religion, like politics, has become a big business in which greedy merchants are desperately engaged for unbridled avarice and unlimited aggrandizement at all costs without consideration for decency and even conscience.

Commercialization of religion which enables private individuals to invest in the building of churches as a business venture, has seriously diminished the value of religion in taste and in colour.

Our respite as Muslims, however, is that Nigerian Imams are not like Nigerian Pastors of the Pentecostal brand of Christianity who preach hatefully to boost their religious businesses and ride in jets at the expense of their congregations. Were Nigerian Imams also to commercialize Islam and preach hatefully like their Christian counterparts of the Pentecostal brand, Nigeria would have ceased to be a country by now.

Let this be a warning to hate preachers in Nigerian Pentecostal Churches that they do not have monopoly of provocation and the patience of Nigerian Muslims is getting exhausted. Elasticity has its limit. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

Long live Nigeria!

- *Editor-in-Chief*

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President Muhammadu Buhari, former Heads of State, Gen. Yakubu Gowon and Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar, President-General and Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Archbishop Justin Welby, and Archbishop of Abuja, Cardinal Onaiyekan (2nd left) at the Interfaith Conference on 'Religious Harmony in Nigeria: Towards the 2019 General Elections', held at Sheraton Hotel, Abuja.

Let's unite for the sake of humanity – Sultan

The President-General and Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, has called on Nigerians to put aside their ethno-religious affinities and unite for the sake of our common humanity. He made this passionate appeal on Thursday, November 15, 2018, during a visit to the pioneer President of the Muslim Community of South West of Nigeria, MUSWEN, and retired Justice of the Supreme Court, Justice Bolarinwa Babalakin at his home town in Gbongan, Osun state.

The Muslim leader said, "There is need for people to live in peace. As Nigerians we are all one. We should continue to live as one. We need to stay together and work for the sake of humanity".

The Sultan praised the patriotic zeal of the jurist in celebrated oration. He charged Nigerians across board to emulate the passion and commitment with which the retired Justice discharged his duties both as a Justice of the Supreme Court and as the pioneer president of the Muslim Ummah of South West Nigeria (MUSWEN).

The President-General appreciated Allah for making the visit a reality. He affirmed that there is no doubt that the retired justice has done his best for the fatherland, adding that history will not forget the giant developmental strides he made for the country.

"We thank Almighty Allah for making today a reality. This visit has been in the pipeline for so long but man proposes and God disposes. Justice Babalakin has paid his dues and contributed his quota to the development of Islam, justice and development at large".

The monarch praised the sterling leadership qualities of the jurist and pioneer president of MUSWEN, adding that MUSWEN as an Islamic organization has stood out especially in the protection of the rights of the Muslims in the South-West for the past 10 years.

In his response, the retired jurist and erstwhile President of MUSWEN expressed deep appreciation to the President-General of NSCIA for the visit and for his support to him when he was made the Amir of MUSWEN 10 years ago.

"It is my great pleasure to welcome you to my humble abode in Gbongan, Osun State of Nigeria. I regard it a great privilege that you consider me worthy of a private visit. I pray fervently that the Almighty Allah will continue to guide you aright in the discharge of your onerous responsibilities".

"I also want to thank you specifically for the support you gave me throughout my tenure as the President of the Muslim Ummah of South-Western Nigeria (MUSWEN). Your support added to the impetus of the society and was a great encouragement to us all. I am also informed that you have extended this support to my successor", he added.

"I want to specifically thank you for the efforts you have made in uniting the Muslim community in the whole of Nigeria. I am particularly happy that you have resolved an issue that has divided the Ummah for a long time which was irregular celebration of Eidel-Fitr. From time immemorial, we have been celebrating this festival on different dates".

He thanked the President-General and wished him a most memorable stay in the West. ■

Let's harness our diversity for national development - Yadudu



Professor of Law, Auwalu Yadudu, speaking at a special programme to mark Nigeria's 58th Independence Anniversary held at the National Mosque, Abuja

By Ibrahim Aselemi

A Professor of Law at Bayero University, Auwalu Yadudu, has urged Nigerians to work together in harmony in order to achieve National development, despite their religious and ethnic diversity. Professor Yadudu made this appeal at a special programme marking the 58th Independence Anniversary of Nigeria, held at the National Mosque, Abuja, on September 29, 2018.

According to the Guest Lecturer, the whole idea of restructuring means different things to different people, adding that in most cases the ethno-geo-political inclination of the people influences the kind of restructuring that they will agitate for.

Professor Yadudu said to some, restructuring is all about correcting the imbalance in the number of states in the geo-political zones especially in the South East of the country. He added that to others, restructuring dates back to 1963, which implies adopting the Parliamentary system and divulging powers to the old regions. To other people still, it means the convocation of a Sovereign National Conference, especially when they are dissatisfied with the prevailing political order of the day, noting further that restructuring means Resource Control and Power -Shift to other regions to some other Nigerians.

The Guest Lecturer defined restructuring as “a legitimate attempt to seek solutions to constitutional issues, or geo-political issues which may relate to structure or attitude”. He opined that Nigeria is running a system with a constitution that is not perfect, hence agitations are bound to happen but that such agitations should be situated within the context of dialogue and

exchange of ideas between the people that make up the federating units of the country.

In discussing the theme of the programme, “Harnessing our diversity for National Development”, he argued that contrary to popular opinion, restructuring predates our political independence, and therefore it is not a new phenomenon in our socio-political discourse. He noted that in the 40s and 50s, there were various competing diverse political communities in the country, each agitating for what it needed in its part of the country.

The august lecturer challenged Nigerians to learn from the agitations of the past and the lessons therein. According to him, some of the lessons that we as a people and government can take home are that people will continue to agitate and demand for their political and economic rights unless and until these rights are given in full, there is a need for dialogue because it is only through dialogue that one can adjust systems and structures and Nigerians must accept their diversity and work towards managing it for national development.

While alluding to relevant portions of the Glorious Qur'an, the don stated further that during the evolution of the Muslim Ummah in Makkah and Yathrib, the issue of diversity was dealt with in many ways through constructive and strategic engagements with the parties involved. He cited the agreement that the Prophet Muhammad [SAW] reached with the people and leaders of Yathrib before settling in the new land as a case in point.

The erudite Professor concluded by saying that “Allah has not willed that we will live in a society that is entirely homogeneous”. He appealed to all to learn from the sagacity of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), in harnessing our diversity for national development. ■

Sultan proffers dialogue as solution to insecurity

The Sultan of Sokoto and President-General of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, NSCIA, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, has reiterated the indispensability of dialogue as a panacea to the lingering insecurity impasse in the country.

The President-General stated this at a public function marking the presentation of a book written by Rebecca Agwai, the daughter to Lt. Gen. Martin Luther Agwai, titled "How a Congress of Baboons made a General", in honour of the former Chief of Defence Staff, Lt. Gen. Martin Luther Agwai (rtd), in Abuja on Wednesday November 7, 2018.

The President-General noted that those behind the palpable insecurity in the country are trying to eviscerate the very essence of our nationhood and the things that hold us together. He however, added that with dialogue between the federating units on one hand, and the ethno-religio-political groups on the other, Nigeria will overcome the myriad of insecurity-related problems confronting the country and her citizens. "Let's continue talking to ourselves, we should never get tired of dialogue", he added.

The Sultan opined that often times, those who should know better are ironically the ones who are economical with the truth. He expressed worry that we as a people appear to have reached an all-time low in our national life, where truth and falsehood have lost their distinctiveness. He challenged Nigerians to always stand on the part of



■ **Sultan Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III**

truth. "Let's not get tired of telling ourselves the truth, because as we all know, the truth shall set us free".

The revered monarch echoed the sentiments held and made popular by the Spanish philosopher and novelist, George Santayana, who said "those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it". According to the Sultan, "we must look at who we were so many years ago and who we are now, and what we want to be in the future". ■

Arabic language wins in France

By Ibrahim Aselemi

Barely two months after the Supreme Court of France gave a landmark judgment against the ban on hijab in public places by the French Government as unconstitutional, null and void and a breach of the fundamental right to freedom of worship of the female Muslims, the government under Emmanuel Macron appears to have granted another desire of the Muslims.

This time, it is the announcement by the French authorities to begin the

introduction of Arabic language into the curriculum to be taught in public schools all over the country, starting at the basic level, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.

Arabic is a "perfect, smooth and rich language," wrote Ernest Renan, a 19th-century French thinker, who praised its "extensive vocabulary, the accuracy of its meanings and the beautiful logic of its structure".

Today, Arabic is the second most spoken language in the country, with an estimated 5 million people using the language daily.

Predictably, the decision of the Emmanuel Macron administration to allow for the teaching of Arabic language in public schools was greeted with angry and bitter criticisms from Right groups who believe the move will encourage radicalism and fundamentalism in France.

Happily, the Education Minister, Mr. Jean-Michel Blanque, argued that Arabic should be treated like all other "great languages" such as Russian, Chinese etc. and vowed to develop the necessary framework for its implementation in public schools. ■

Moonsighting in Nigeria

By Simwal Usman Jibril

INTRODUCTION

The arrival of the months of Ramadan and Shawwal brings up the old subject of moonsighting, with different and divisive views on the official announcement of commencement or ending Ramadan by His Eminence, the Sultan of Sokoto. This article will seek to explain the concept of lunation (the period of time from one new moon to the next) and the activities of the National Moonsighting Committee (NMSC) of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs Nigeria (NSCIA).

The Prophet S.A.W said, "Fast when you see it (i.e the moon) and cease fasting when you see it, and if it is hidden or cloudy, then complete 30 days". The hadith is agreed upon (i.e. narrated by Buhari and Muslim).

LUNATION OF THE MOON

First, it should be noted that the moon is a solid body and does not shine light in itself unlike the sun or stars but its light is a reflection from the sunlight that falls on its surface. This fact is also alluded to from the following verse of the Qur'an: "It is He (Allah) who made the sun shine and the moon glow and determined the lunar phases that you may know the number of years and calculation" (Yunus 10:5).

The moon orbits the earth once every 29.53 days (average of synodic month). Because of this revolution, phases of the moon change as the moon's position changes relative to the earth and the sun.

During the moon's orbit, if the moon, earth and the sun lie exactly at the same line and the moon is in the middle, the sun will illuminate half of the moon that faces it, and the other half which faces us, will be dark because it does not reflect rays of the sun. At this point, the moon is called astronomical new moon (conjunction of a new moon). After that, the moon continues orbiting the earth and begins to reflect a small amount of sun's rays and now we see the moon as a very small waxing crescent. Afterwards, it becomes first quarter, full moon, last quarter, waning crescent and then wane again. The new moon phase is certainly a unique instant all over the world.

Moon's age is measured from the moment of conjunction (new moon). We often say this full moon is 14 days old, which means that the number of days after the new moon is 14. And we say this crescent is about 2-3 days old or 5 hours old.

The new moon is located exactly at the sun's direction, so the sun's glare will prevent us from seeing it. In addition, the percentage of the reflected rays out of the new moon is almost zero, but this percentage increases as the moon's age increases. Generally, the human eye through a telescope can't detect any reflected rays on the moon if the moon's age is less than about 12 hours, while unaided naked eye cannot detect any reflected rays on the new moon until after about 17 hours following conjunction. The new waxing crescent is located near the sun, so it is not possible to sight it until after sunset, because it is obviously not possible to observe the thin waxing crescent before sunset. In addition, we must wait a reasonable time until the twilight decreases, i.e. until we can differentiate between moon's light and twilight glare, a 10-minute period could be enough sometimes to detect the thin waxing crescent.

The moon, like the sun, rises from the east and sets after about 12 hours at the west (with exceptions at high-latitude areas) each day, and since the waxing crescent lies near the sun, it will set after the sunset. The new moon rises and sets at about the same time as the sun, but as the moon moves in its orbit around the earth, it will progressively move towards the east away from the sun as the days pass by after the new moon. The moon will rise about 50 minutes late after a day, and that is why a new crescent on a second day is seen for a longer period after sunset compared to the first day before it sets.

There are several factors that must be met in order to view the thin waxing crescent: Some of these factors are:-

- The crescent's altitude (i.e. height above the horizon).
- The angular distance between the centers of sun and moon.
- The moon's Lag time (the interval between the sunset and the moon set).
- The azimuth difference between the sun and the moon.

With the above brief explanation, it is hopefully clear how a new moon occurs. The point of contention is usually the size of the moon on the second evening when it is easily visible to virtually everybody. There are divisive opinions, some think it is too big for the first day crescent, while others believe it's a two-day old crescent. As mentioned above, age of a moon is counted after conjunction of its new moon. For instance, the conjunction of Ramadan 1439H moon occurred on the 15th May 2018 at 12:48PM Nigerian time, which was equivalent to 28th Shaaban Nigeria official Islamic date. So, by the evening of that day in Nigeria the crescent was about 6 hours old in Nigeria and moon set was about 12 minutes after sunset. So it was not possible to sight a 6-hour old crescent that evening.

The following day, 16th May (29th Shaaban 1439H official Nigerian Islamic date) by sunset the crescent was about 30 hours old and moonset was about 1 hour 12 minutes after sunset; the crescent was sighted in different locations in Nigeria and we commenced Ramadan the next day on the 17th May.

On the 17th May, first day of Ramadan the crescent was clearly visible to everybody, after sunset that evening the crescent was about 54 hours old (more than 2 days old) and moon set was 2 hours 13 minutes after sunset. This brought about the argument that the crescent was too big for the first day of Ramadan. The reason it was quite big was that it was technically more than 2 days old but Islamically it was a day old based on actual naked eye sighting.

A similar scenario happened at the end of Ramadan. The conjunction of Shawwal crescent occurred on Wednesday the 13th June (28th Ramadan 1439) at 8:43PM Nigerian time. It is important to note that since conjunction of the new moon occurred after sunset same evening the moon has set before sunset and hence it is no more on the horizon. For this reason, it is absolutely impossible to see it. The next day, Thursday 29th Ramadan 1439 (14th June 2018) by sunset the crescent was 22 hours old and moonset was about 50 minutes after sunset. The crescent was seen in different locations in Nigeria and His Eminence, the Sultan of Sokoto, declared Friday 1st Shawwal 1439 (15th June 2018).

The following evening on Friday 1st Shawwal (15th June), by sunset the crescent was about 46 hours (almost 2 days) old and moonset was about 1 hour 54 minutes after sunset. That was why the crescent was again relatively big and clearly visible.

ACTIVITIES OF THE NATIONAL MOONSIGHTING COMMITTEE

The committee comprises Ulama (Islamic scholars), scientists, astronomers and other dedicated members. The committee is tasked with coordinating the sighting of new crescent in Nigeria for all the twelve lunar months from Muharram to Dhul Hijjah every year, and it is also saddled with the responsibility of verifying sighting claims.

On the 27th of every Islamic month, a reminder is sent to all members to endeavor to search for the new crescent and report back (positive or negative). A report of the sighting outcome is then written and sent to His Eminence with appropriate recommendations based on the sighting result advising him to either declare the next day beginning of the next lunar month if there is positive sighting or announce completion of 30 days for the current month if the results are negative.

His Eminence further discusses with the Sultanate Advisory Council and then officially declares the beginning of every month via a press release signed by the Secretary of Sultanate Advisory Council on his behalf.

Some of the questions asked during verification are:

- 1) What time was the crescent sighted?
- 2) Was sunset visible or it was cloudy?

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Lifting of ban on Hijab by Lagos State Gov't: A Greek gift

By Ibrahim Aselemi

In Greek mythology, we are told of the story of a giant wooden horse left behind by the Greeks as a "Gift" during the Trojan War. Usually, we are elated when we receive a gift from someone. It is somewhat a part of human nature. Whenever we receive gifts, the mere fact that it is "free of charge" gives us unwonted joy, a joy that sometimes blinds us to the shenanigans of the giver. The truth is that nothing is free even in Freetown. Hence the saying, "beware of the Greek bearing gifts."

So, it did not come as a surprise the avalanche of comments, most of which are very critical and wary of the recent directive by the Lagos State Government, through the Tutor-General, and signed by one A.O. Olukoya entitled "Re – The Use of Hijab in Lagos State Public Schools."

For me, the lifting of the ban on the use of Hijab, placed on Muslim students in Lagos State in flagrant disobedience to the decision of the Appellate Court, is not something to cheer about. I am tempted to think that the decision to lift the ban is prompted by political motives, especially given the fact it came a few days to the

For me, the lifting of the ban on the use of Hijab, placed on Muslim students in Lagos state in flagrant disobedience to the decision of the Appellate Court, is not something to cheer about.

commencement of political campaigns in the country.

What worries me is the audacity with which the Government continued its vendetta against Muslims. They were harassed, embarrassed, oppressed, down pressed, suppressed and repressed. It will be recalled that series of letters were written by Muslim organizations, appealing to the authorities to uphold the Rule of Law but to no avail. Instead, the Lagos State Government headed to the Supreme Court, to challenge the decision of the Appellate Court.

And then suddenly, after nearly three years of the historic verdict, the Government, with a few months to the expiration of the administration, decided to abide by the decision of the Appeal Court which was issued in July 2016.

I would have applauded the Government's decision if it was accompanied by a directive to its council to withdraw its appeal at the Supreme Court.

So, for me, there is absolutely nothing to cheer about. In fact, I see the gesture of the Lagos State Government which was hurriedly put together as a "Greek Horse." The real intent and purpose of the Government will be unveiled in a matter of time. ■

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3) What side of sunset was the crescent sighted? (Note: new crescent's position just like the sun is not fixed, it is different for every month).

4) What was the moon's orientation? (The crescent orientation also changes with the months its horns may be slightly tilted to the north, slightly tilted to the south or face directly upwards. But a new crescent never faces down).

5) What was the last time the crescent was sighted?

VERIFYING SIGHTING CLAIMS

The moment a crescent sighting report is received, the committee takes full contact address and phone numbers of witnesses to follow up and verify the report. I will mention a few of the verification exercises carried out by the committee (names are withheld for privacy reasons).

1) There was a Shawwal crescent sighting claim on Wednesday evening 13th June from Argungu, Kebbi State. We requested for the phone numbers and names of those who sighted it, but as I write this article we are yet to receive it. We followed up by sending someone to Argungu to search and ask around but yet nobody came forward to own up sighting report.

2) There was a sighting claim too on Wednesday 13th June/28th Ramadan at Wauru in Sokoto. We followed up and found out that about 100 people gathered to search for the Shawwal crescent because they believed Ramadan was started a day late. Only one person out of the gathering claimed sighting the crescent and it wasn't sighted by the rest and hence they all rejected his sighting claim.

3) Some years back in Adamawa, three persons claimed sighting the crescent. They were invited for verification separately. The first

person said he saw it at so and so time and described that the crescent's orientation was facing slightly southwards. The second person gave a totally different description of the crescent and position and the last person also gave a totally different narration.

4) There was a crescent sighting claim in Lere. That day it was cloudy and rainy but still the person claimed he saw the crescent. A member of the committee was dispatched to Lere the next day. He met the witness and the witness claimed he was with a second person, but he alone saw the crescent between clouds just under an electric pole wire. The second person then claimed he raised his arms and prayed to Allah to make him amongst those few favored and blessed people that will see the new Ramadan crescent, and he claimed that Allah answered his prayer and the crescent reappeared for some seconds in the same location under the pole wire and then disappeared. (Strangely, the pole wire in question was in fact in the southern direction not west!!)

These are just a few examples of what the National Moon Sighting Committee goes through and experiences with persons claiming sighting crescents in the course of discharging its responsibility.

May Allah guide us all to further our understanding and teachings of Islam, ameen. May He accept our worship and prayers during the sacred month of Ramadan, forgive our sins and overlook our shortcomings, grant us His blessings and favor, ameen. May He keep us united on the right path in service of His religion and dedication to the cause of His Prophet (SAW) ameen. ■

The Punch, ThisDay and El-Rufai's 'Muslim' Running Mate Controversy

By Rasheed Abubakar

When Samuel Ortom, the Christian Governor of Benue State named another brother-in-Christ, Benson Abonu, as his running mate for the 2019 gubernatorial election, there was no uproar from Nigerians over their religion (Christianity).

The headline of Punch, October 17, 2018 was lenient with the embattled Governor, whose supporters had likened to Jesus Christ for accepting to die for the Benue people, as indicated on inscriptions on his campaign bus.

"Ortom picks running mate, says he'll respect power separation" was the simple and straight forward headline used by the newspaper, with another quote attributed to Ortom, who promised to respect the separation of powers.

There are similar cases in other states, including Ekiti, where the just sworn-in Governor, John Olukayode Fayemi (also a Christian) ignored the calls for a Muslim running mate, and nominated a Christian as his running mate.

In fact, *The Punch's* headline of May 31, 2018 quoted a chieftain of the ruling APC, Opeyemi Bamidele, who hailed the appointment of Chief Bisi Egbeyemi as Fayemi's running mate.

What did the Muslims do? They strongly and peacefully expressed their dissatisfaction over what they tagged "the continuous marginalisation of Muslims in Ekiti State", but what happened after that? Nothing! Just the social media outcry, and that was the end.

The next news we heard was that the same Ekiti Muslims opened the doors of their Central Mosque for Governor Fayemi to observe Solatul Jumat (Friday Prayer Service) with them, a similar gimmick used by the former Governor Ayodele Fayose (again, a Christian) during his eight years in office.

Governor Fayemi quickly rushed to his Twitter handle on Friday, October 19 to break the news, saying he performed a "Jumat Thanksgiving Service" at Ado Ekiti with "my Muslim brothers and sisters".

Suddenly, the evidently marginalized Muslims of Ekiti became the marginalizing Governor's "brothers and sisters", despite the fact that there was no single Muslim among his first three appointees - the Secretary to the State Government, the Chief of Staff and the Chief Press Secretary.

Heavens did not fall, because Yoruba Muslims are reputed to be the most tolerant set of people in Nigeria. The media did not go gaga on the religion of Fayemi's running mate, and the first three appointments he made as Governor, in a state where the Muslim population is arguably between 35-40%.

However, when the Kaduna State Governor, Nasir El-Rufai presented Dr. Hadiza Balarabe as his running mate, *The Punch* quickly changed the narrative with the sole intent to trigger religious crisis with the headline: "El-Rufai picks fellow Muslim, Hadiza Balarabe as running mate" in its online and print edition of Saturday, November 3, 2018.

The newspaper, which had hitherto hidden the religious identities of Ortom's and Fayemi's running mates, mischievously used "fellow Muslim" to describe El-Rufai's running mate, in a clear bid to incite the good people of Kaduna State against the Governor on the choice of Dr. Hadizah, which they claimed would fuel the violent clashes between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna.

The media and other El-Rufai critics conveniently forgot that Plateau and Benue States - with Christian/Christian tickets - have been in turmoil for the same reasons in the last couple of years. Hence, if it is wrong for El-Rufai to field a Muslim/Muslim ticket, then it is equally blameworthy for Simon Lalong and Ortom to field Christians as running mates.

As if that is not enough, another medium, *ThisDay* newspaper,

came with a more damning, inciting and screaming headline: "El-Rufai Dares Southern Kaduna Christians, Picks Muslim Woman as Running Mate", as republished on its website.

This same *ThisDay*, five months ago, did not give Fayemi the El-Rufai treatment. In fact, the religion (Christianity) of Bisi Egbeyemi was conspicuously missing in its headline as seen here: "Ekiti 2018: Fayemi Picks Former Commissioner, Egbeyemi as Deputy".

One wonders why the same *ThisDay* refused to be interested in the rich credentials of El-Rufai's running mate, but decided to go for the jugular of Nigeria's security and its citizens' safety by featuring a treasonable and conflict-prone headline.

But, is Hadizah even a Muslim? There is no clear evidence of that from the intimidating profile of hers released to the press by Mr. Samuel Aruwan, Governor El-Rufai's spokesman.

The Punch, ThisDay and other media only deduced their assumed "Christianity" from her name, while being totally ignorant of the fact that there are many bearers of such names in Southern Kaduna and the northern states who are actually Christians.

There are also reports that Hadizah is neither a Fulani nor a Hausa woman. Hadizah is rather a Numaya Christian from Gwantu town, a 100% Christian community in Sanga Local Government Area in Kaduna state.

Is it not funny how the above fact, which is virtually everywhere, escaped the celebrated and acclaimed "investigative reporting department" of *The Punch, ThisDay* and other frivolous media?

While it is essential for the Kaduna State Government to clear the air on the religious affiliation of Hadiza Balarabe to douse the needless tension the terror-triggering reports have generated on the cyber space, it is also important for journalists to leave out what is doubtful, just as they must refrain from reporting outright lies deliberately.

In straight news stories, for instance, the job of journalists is to report recent events judged to be newsworthy the way they are, without the writer's opinions or false impressions capable of promoting hatred or religious division among members of the community.

Hence, it would have been more accurate for *The Punch, ThisDay* and other media who mischievously incited the public with the "Muslim/Muslim ticket" rhetoric to have said: "El-Rufai picks running mate...", similar to the manners they reported the Plateau and Benue stories, or better still, "El-Rufai picks woman as running mate", as earlier published on Friday by *The Punch* online before the Saturday Editor painted the story with a religious coloration.

Interestingly, the female angle is in itself very newsworthy and positive, since such male-female pairing is very rare in the Northern States. This is only the second time a female would be chosen to run as Deputy Governor in the 51-year history of Kaduna State and as indicated in the press release, it was part of Governor El-Rufai's "deliberate policy on promoting women, their causes and their involvement in politics".

But whose interests are these rogue media pushing. Are they interested in fueling religious and ethnic crisis? Are they really interested in a peaceful Nigeria? Do they realise they are also citizens of Nigeria? If I may ask, are these media not justifying the suspicions and allegations that they are doing the bidding of the destructive opposition and enemies of the Nigerian nation?

Irrespective of their interests, *The Punch, ThisDay* and other mischievous media should realise THAT they are free to investigate El-Rufai's claims and religion of Dr. Balarabe if they truly care. They could go beyond mere news reportage via news analyses, features, columns or editorials, which reflect their official opinions about the issue and the events that surround it. ■

Governor Wike's Anti-Muslim Rhetoric: A Recipe for Anarchy in Nigeria?

By Ibrahim Aselemi

The persistent anti-Islamic rhetoric of the Governor of Rivers State, Barrister Nyesom E. Wike, in recent times has become a source of grave concern and worry to every thoughtful observer of the socio-political and ethno-religious sentiments whipped up by religious bigots and ethnic jingoists in our dear country, Nigeria.

The Rivers State Governor has developed a penchant for whipping up these anti-Islamic sentiments [reminiscent of candidate Donald Trump at his Republican campaign rallies] at every forum in which the opportunity presents itself, thereby heating up the already charged religious and political atmosphere in the country.

My attention was first drawn to Governor Wike's vituperations on Sunday, January 29, 2017, during the Holy Ghost Rally organized by the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Region 5 in Port Harcourt. During the programme, Barrister Nyesom Wike stated unequivocally that Rivers State is 100% a Christian State. And as if that was not insulting enough, the Governor went further to add that he did not owe anybody any apology for the position he had taken, as if his mandate was to govern Christians alone.

Again, during the hand-over of the over N300 million [three hundred million] Naira Ecumenical Center to the Rivers State Branch of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), built with the commonwealth of the state, on May 28, 2017, Governor Wike again declared that Rivers State is 100% Christian State, reiterating again that he did not owe anyone any apology.

Just when one thought one had heard it all, Governor Wike again for the umpteenth time reiterated his previous statements that Rivers State is 100% Christian State. This time, it was during a courtesy visit on him at the Government House by the Ministers Prayer Network International, led by its International Head Coordinator, Rev. Mossy Madugba on January 17, 2018. It is also on record that Governor Wike released the humongous sum of N1 billion Naira to the group for rural evangelism in Nigeria.

In clear terms, Governor Wike's utterances are divisive, bigoted, myopic, Islamophobic, undemocratic, unconstitutional, shameful, repugnant and inconsistent with the oath of office he took.

I think the Governor's utterances amount to hate speech, and a recipe for anarchy in Nigeria. The said highly discriminatory and fallacious statements undermine the security of the nation in that they could

trigger-off crises in the country. They also smack of gross insensitivity on the side of the Governor and reveal him as an agent provocateur with a hidden agenda of igniting religious inferno in the country. There is no state in the country that is religiously monolithic. If these statements were deliberate as they were, they were satanic, and if they were said in ignorance, the Governor's ignorance is inexcusable.

The Governor's serial outbursts did not take into cognizance many Muslim men and women working assiduously in the security apparatus to make the state secure for living and investments. His verbal diarrhea is a direct slap on the face of many Muslims who are captains of industries, and ordinary citizens who contribute monthly to the GDP and IGR of the State.

Governor Wike's vituperations could fuel and inspire Hate Crimes against Muslims in the state and beyond. This is because history is replete with compelling evidence and striking illustrations of how political rhetoric from people in power play a role in directing adverse behavioral change and negative violent action of the majority against the minority.

One is also worried that such naked comments from the Rivers State Chief Executive Officer may play into the hands of radical clerics and this could snowball into a religious conflagration that may consume the innocent.

It is also important to state that the conspiracy of silence by the hierarchs of the Christian faith in all these gatherings where the Governor made these comments is worrisome and morally unconscionable. It is also unfortunate that the Nigerian media are complicit by not taking the Governor to account, thereby emboldening him to spew his outbursts at every available opportunity. One is certain that if a Muslim Governor had made similar statements anywhere in the North, the media would have been awash with the said comments.

On the basis of the forgoing, I think the Federal Government and the security apparatus in the country

should caution the Rivers State Governor against these undemocratic remarks and to hold the Governor solely responsible for any breakdown of law and order in Rivers State caused by his comments. ■

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Between you and the New Year

- Continued from back page

penalty. For Allah is not unmindful of what you do" (Q. Al-Baqarah, 2:85).

The hijrah months are twelve as well and Muslims are to be conversant with them. They are Muharram, Safar, Rabi'ul Awwal, Rabi' Thany, Jumadal Ula, Jumadah Thaniyah, Rajab, Sha'ban, Ramadhan, Shawwal, Dhul Qa'dah and Dhul Hijjah. The consciousness of Islamic calendar should be upheld such that one knows the Islamic date, anyday, and undertakes the spiritual obligations encouraged for selected dates (i.e the 13th, 4th, and 15th days of every month for voluntary fasting).

As part of starting a new year, moreover, a Muslim must be conscious of the historical antecedent of Hijrah. Hijrah itself means migration. The Prophet (SAW) with his companions had to migrate from Makkah to Medinah at the peak of his travails in the hands of the unbelievers. Muslims had been patient with all forms of oppression unleashed on them by the unbelievers for 13 years. Hijrah therefore symbolizes a quest for religious emancipation, a spiritual journey from the darkness of restriction to the light of freedom. It is this mind-frame that a Muslim should have and acknowledge as another Hijrah year begins, not join the bandwagon of celebrating what is evidently baseless on January 1.

The Gregorian calendar, it should be stressed, was instituted by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. It was modeled after the Roman calendar that was started in the 7th Century BC, because of certain anomalies regarding a festival (vernal equinox) that did not fall in the right season. It is called the Christian calendar because it uses the birth of Jesus (PBUH) as a starting date.

January, the first month of the year, is derived from Janus, the Roman god of gates and doorways. This was the 11th month in ancient Roman calendar. It was on January 1 that the Romans offered sacrifices to Janus so that he would bless the new year. The symbol was a double-faced head, looking at opposite directions.

Muslims who celebrate January 1 do not do so to follow the Prophet (SAW). They can only do so to follow the pagan practices of the Romans. And since the Prophet (SAW) said that whoever imitates a particular people is among them, it goes without saying that those that are in fond of celebrating January 1 are with the Romans, not the Ummah of Muhammad (SAW). This is the 'big' implication of doing a supposedly small thing - just a new year.

The Islamic calendar had been in use for more than a thousand and four hundred years. Not every Muslim is familiar with its months as s/he should be. The months that we are familiar with are of recent history and they are rooted in idolatry. Great Britain only started to adopt the Gregorian calendar in 1752, forfeiting 10 days in the process. The defunct Soviet Union only embraced the calendar in 1918 while Greece did not use it until 1923.

February, derived from februa, signifies the festival of purification that was celebrated in ancient Rome. It was originally 29 days long. February was 'cheated': a day was transferred from it to the month of August (for a reason that will be shown later). The Roman calendar began with March. February was a later addition.

March, the third month, was named after Mars, the god of war. Until Great Britain adopted the calendar, March was considered the first month with the legal year beginning on March 25. April was named 'Aprilis' by the Romans. It derived from 'aperire'(to open) because it was the season in which buds began to open.

May was the 3rd month of the old Roman calendar and it was named after Maia, the Roman goddess of spring and growth.

Celebrations were held in honour of Flora, the goddess of flower. The celebrations attained their peak on May 1, which constitutes the basis of May Day or Workers' Day celebrations.

There are theories for the origin of June, the 4th month of the old Roman calendar. Two of them will serve our purpose. One stated that it was derived from a Roman goddess named Juno, the patron goddess of marriage. The other said it was the name of a Roman clan, Junius. One thing about June is that it used to have 29 days. It was Julius Caesar that added a 30th day to it.

July, the 5th month in the old Roman calendar, was called Quintilis, or 5th month, by the Romans. This was the month in which Julius Caesar was born. So, in 44 BC, the year he was assassinated, the month was named after him.

August was the 6th month in the old Roman calendar. It was originally called Sextilis (from Latin *sextus*, sixth). It was given its present name in honour of the first of the Roman emperors, Augustus. It was due to the politics of making the month equal to the 5th month, changed to name of Julius, that a day was taken from February and added to August.

September was the 7th month of the Roman calendar. It was so named from *septem*, meaning seven. October was the 8th month of the old calendar. When the Romans designated January 1 as the beginning of the year, October became the tenth. November was the ninth month originally, deriving from the Latin *novem*. It formerly consisted of 29 days until Augustus gave it the 10th day. December used to be the 10th month (from the Latin *decem*, '10') in the old Roman calendar.

As we begin another year, 1440 precisely, Allah asks, "Do they then seek after a judgment of (the Days of) Ignorance? But who for a people whose faith is assured can give better judgment than Allah?" (Q. Maidah 5:50). We should keep faith with the judgement of Allah in the new year and resolve to heed the 15-point advice of one of our scholars from 1440 onwards so that we will not only be adding years to our life but we shall be adding life to the limited years we have to spend here:

(1) Devote a daily period for reading the book of Allah. You are to finish the whole book in a month.

(2) Show interest in the cleanliness and tidiness of your home and place of work.

(3) Always be truthful, never tell a lie.

(4) Fulfil your promises and agreements. Never breach a covenant.

(5) Be courageous and enduring.

(6) Always be serious and dignified though you can smile and engage in truthful jokes.

(7) Always have bashful, delicate feelings. Be sensitive to beauty and ugliness.

(8) Be compassionate, graciously excusing and forgiving others. Be tender, forbearing and clement to people and animals and observe good manners with everyone.

(9) Be proficient in reading and writing. Establish a private library, no matter how small.

(10) Always be conscious of Allah (SWT), seek His pleasure with determination and resoluteness.

(11) Perfect your prayers, and strive to perform them within their proper time period.

(12) Avoid corrupt friends and evil companions. Keep away from places of immorality and sin.

(13) Perfect your personal purity and cleanliness. Try to be in a state of ablution most of the time.

(14) Always cherish the intention of Jihad (striving in the way of Allah) and actually prepare yourself for that.

(15) Propagate your call everywhere, but don't be noisy. ■

THE SUBJECT MATTER

Mahfouz A. Adedimeji

Between you and the New Year

Let's be frank, Islam is a delicate religion - delicate in the sense that a supposedly trivial issue may cast one into the depth of damnation and disbelief. The watchword is thus caution in everything that a Muslim does so that he does not fall prey to the wiles of Shaitan, whose stock-in-trade is to whisper evil to his target and justify what is erroneous.

Allah recommends that He be known before He is worshipped. Everything in His religion is based on rules, regulations and divine law, not rationalization and concocted analogy or false logic. One can only rationalize Islam to one's own peril. A case in point is that of excessive new year celebrations.

There are two festivals in Islam, the Eidul Fitr, celebrated at the end of Ramadan and Eidul Adha that is marked at the peak of Hajj rites. A third possibility is the weekly festival engendered by the Juma't service. Other celebrations are mere simulations as those are the authentic festivals.

While it is acknowledged that there is a Gregorian calendar, the new Islamic year is here and we can heartily say, "Happy New Year"! This is Safar, the second month of the new year in the reckoning of Islam, the complete way of life. It is thus wrong, hence sinful, to celebrate what is not in the record of Allah. It is more sinful to rationalize and trivialize it. If the Prophet (SAW) did not do or approve anything, such a thing stands discouraged at least and forbidden at best.

"Little" things have "big" implications. One cannot be a Muslim by half and it is for this reason Allah commands us to enter into Islam kaafatan or in totality (Q. Al-Baqarah 2: 208) It is either one is submissive to Allah or one is rebellious. A true Muslim thus surrenders himself totally to what Islam says and does not meddle in anything contrary to his faith. The Gregorian calendar is not the Islamic calendar and celebrating what is not Islamic may amount to rebelling against the Prophet (SAW) and suggesting that his message is not complete (contrary to what Allah says: "This day have I perfected your religion for you" (Q. Al-Maa'idah 5:3)

"You have in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day and who engages much in the praise of Allah"(Q. Al-Ahzab 33:21). "Then, is it only part of the Book that you believe in and you reject the rest? But what is the reward for those among you who behave like this but disgrace in this life? And on the Day of Judgement they shall be consigned to the most grievous

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PRESS RELEASE KADUNA FURY: WE ARE DISTURBED

Once again, national and international radio waves throbbed with disturbing news of an outbreak of crisis in Kaduna, the capital city of Kaduna State. The crisis was said to have consumed about 55 lives with scores of people sustaining injuries.

The immediate cause of the crisis that was said to have spilled to areas like Mararrabar Rido and spilled to Sabon Tasha and Tudun Wada Central Market on Sunday, October 21, 2018, still remains foggy but reports indicated that it actually started on Friday, October 19, 2018, at Kasuwar Magani area. The new dimension of the crisis, this time, was so fierce that a 24-hour curfew had to be declared by the State Government in the city. This means that no resident or visitor in the troubled area would be able to go out of his/her lodge either in pursuit of business or even health maintenance.

Besides, the Inspector General of Police (IGP) had reportedly mobilized some scores of special anti-riot and anti-terrorism forces to the State to tame the rage of disharmony and quench the fury of anger. Whatever might have caused this latest crisis and whatever investigations are to follow must not be an immediate matter of concern for the authorities now. The immediate concern should be the taming of the proverbial shrew that is bent on sucking the blood of humans and ruining the sources of economy.

When the whirlwind of evil is settled, investigations into the causes and effects of that terribly devastating crisis should start with thoroughness with a view to putting a final stop to incessant crisis in the State. For now, let killings, maiming and wonton destruction of property stop and be immediately replaced with a conducive atmosphere in which people can move freely in peace and harmony in the pursuit of their desires.

The Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), under the leadership of its President-General and Sultan of Sokoto, His Eminence, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, CFR, mni, is very much disturbed by the current crisis in Kaduna, the capital city of Kaduna State. This is because such crisis, becoming too frequent, is capable of snowballing into a national calamity. The most disturbing aspect of that crisis so far is the religious undertone to which the press is, as usual, linking it.

We call on the Kaduna State Government as well as the Federal Government to handle the volatile issue with care to prevent it from getting aggravated. If Nigerians need peaceful coexistence as citizens, this is the time. We will not be tired of telling government to bring all those that have hands in these crises to book because, as it were, failure to do just this has been the most significant factor in making these unfortunate incidents to be recurrent decimals in the country.

While we may not be in a position to tell government of the right measures to take in averting these kinds of tragic incidents, we have the right to express our opinion to the effect that the persistence of these incidents is continuously eroding people's confidence in government. Similarly it smacks of lack of cooperation, synergy and coordination among the various security agencies and organizations, needless to talk about near complete absence of intelligence gathering.

These are challenges that the Federal Government will have to address urgently not only to ensure the entrenchment of enduring peace, but also to sustain people's confidence and goodwill. ■

Signed
Prof. Salisu Shehu
Deputy Secretary-General, NSCIA